

COMPUTER GAMES

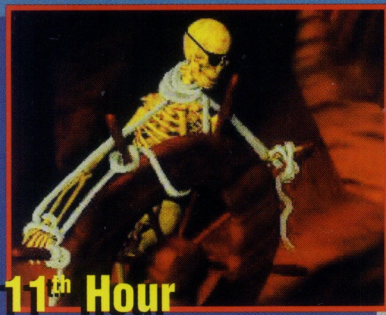
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Nº. 63 February 1996



Warcraft II



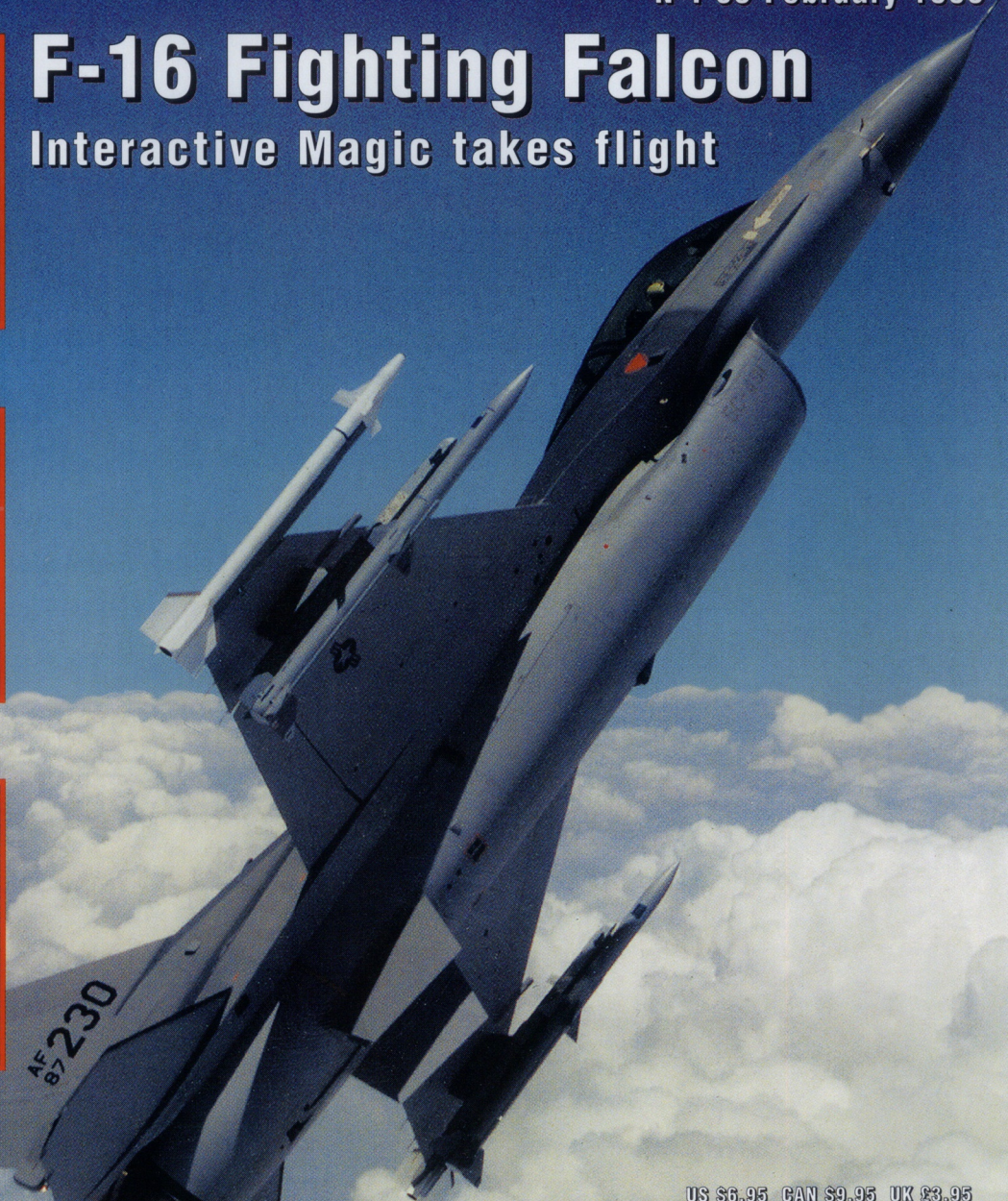
11th Hour



Stonekeep

F-16 Fighting Falcon

Interactive Magic takes flight



Plus

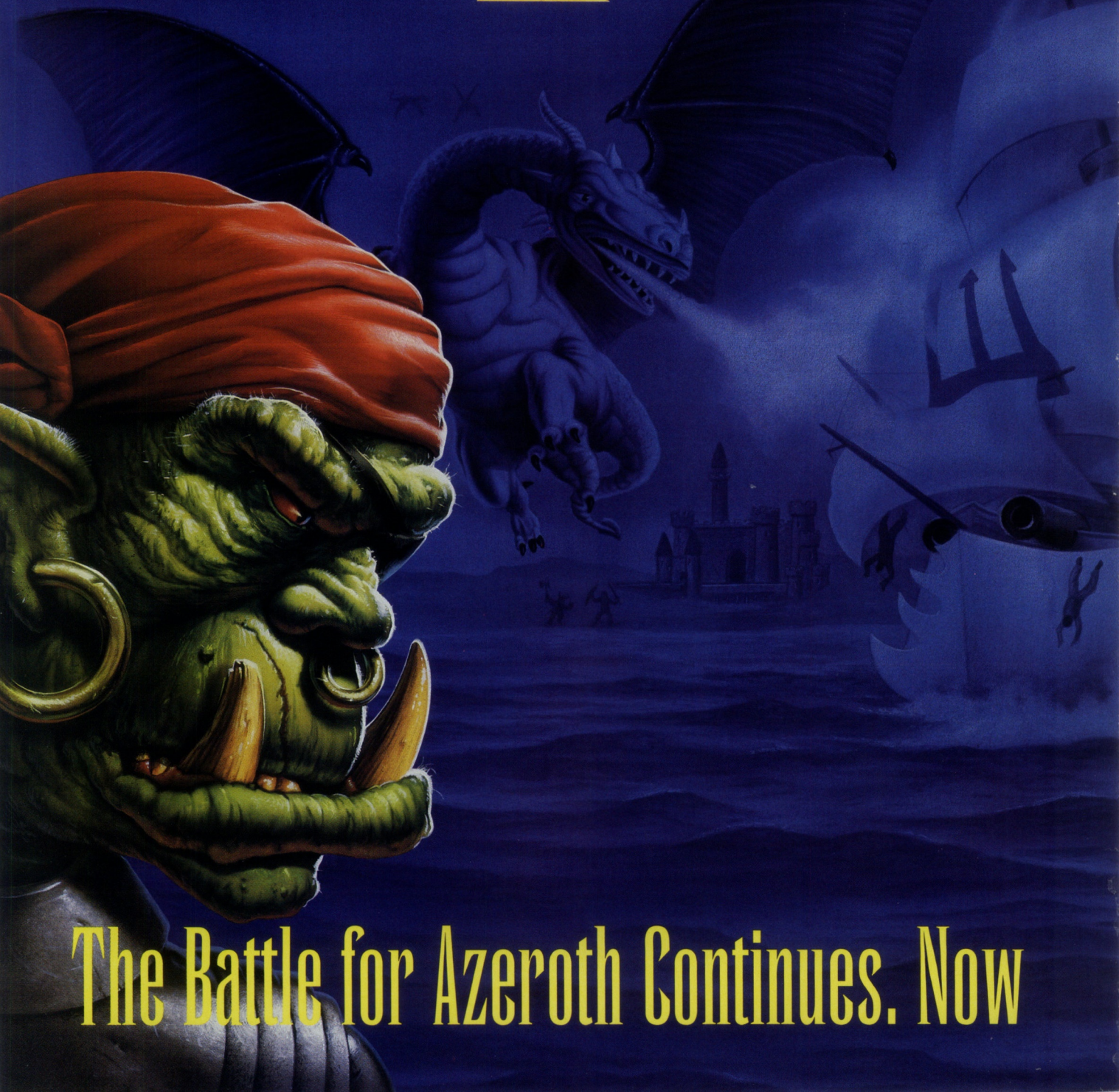
Capitalism, Rebel Assault II, Command & Conquer, The Dig
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Beavis & Butt-head, TFX:EF2000, Hexen, Navy Strike, Flight Shop
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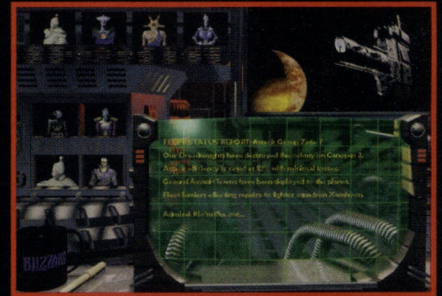
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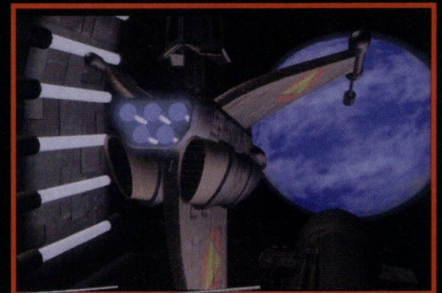


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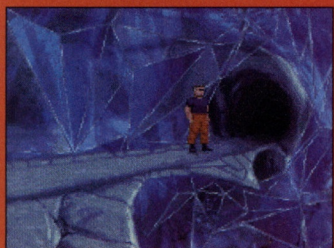
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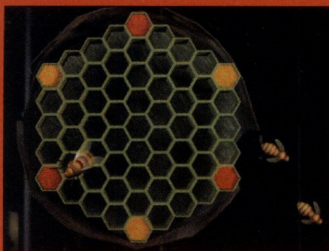
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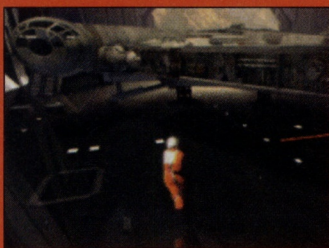
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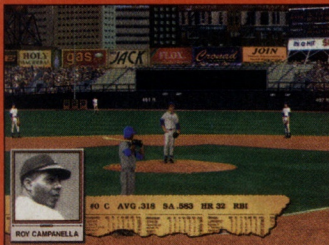
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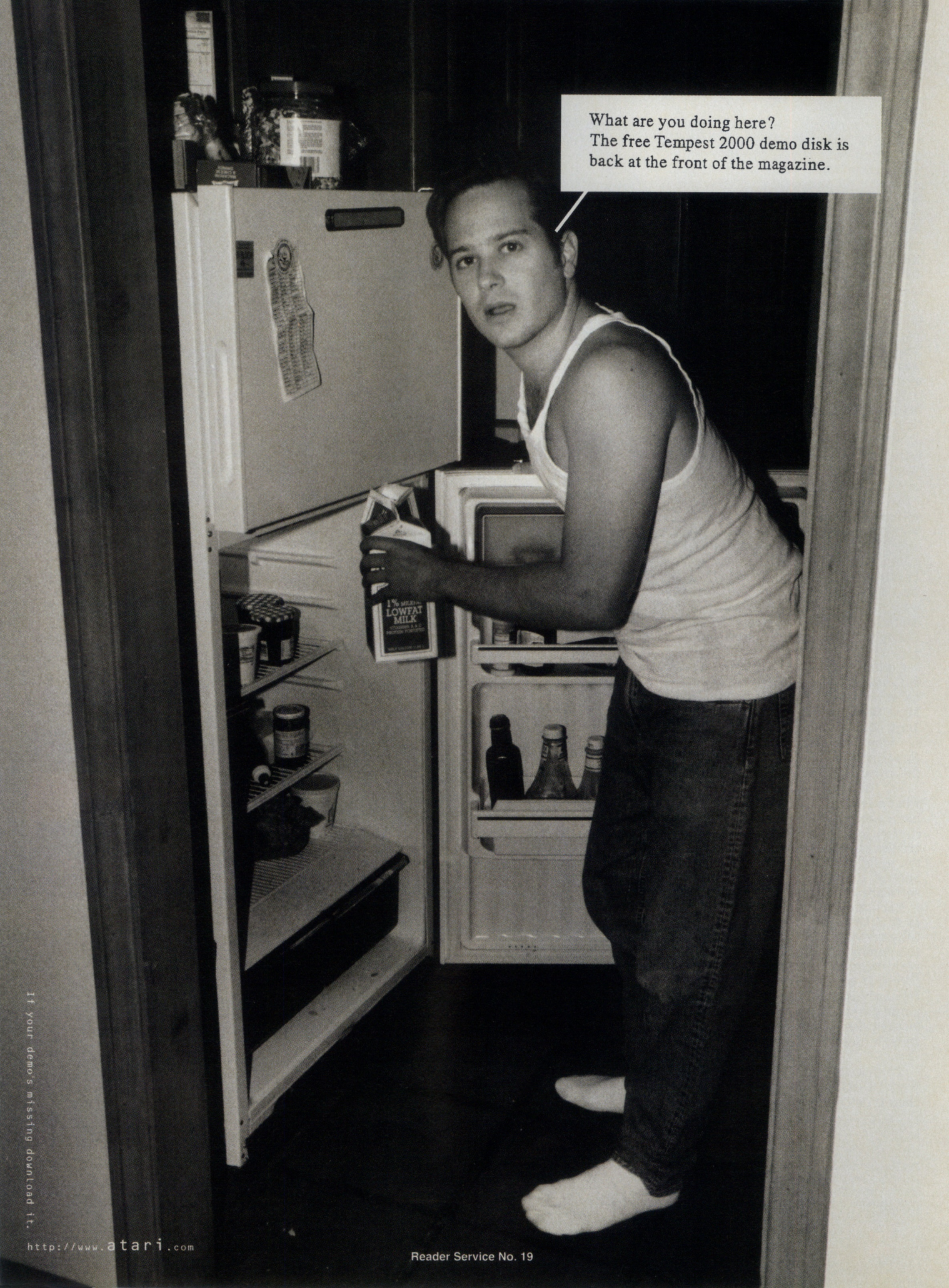
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What are you doing here?
The free Tempest 2000 demo disk is
back at the front of the magazine.

Not everything is ETCHED IN STONE

And it is written that after 40 days and 40 nights, Moses finally came down from the mount with the Lord's Ten Commandments. Written by the hand of the Lord, he bestowed the almighty's tablets upon his people and said "Let thou live by these, the Lord's Commandments." And the people took these laws unto their bosom, whereupon they noticed that Moses began to ascend the mountaintop once more. An incredulous voice cried out to him.

"Moses, once more you climb the mountaintop after spending 40 days and nights away from your family and people. I beseech you, what reason have you to take leave of your people again? Is there yet more for us to consider?"

Wild-eyed and driven, he turned to face his flock. A smile crossed his bearded face.

"Why, of course there's more. I go to bring back the *Strategy Plus* demo CD. You didn't think I could carry everything in one trip did you?"

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Combine those with *Virgin's Command & Conquer*, *Atari's Tempest 2000*, *Cyberdreams' I Have No Mouth* and *I Must Scream*, *Sony's Lemmings 3D* and a host of hosts' other demos and you can see why the Pharaoh banished the *Strategy Plus* team from Egypt. Work on the pyramids had grown to a halt!

So, forget about needlessly spending what's left of your paycheck downloading huge game demos. Oftentimes they're corrupted long before you ever get to see the credits roll! Instead, rely on Pharaoh and the gang at *Strategy Plus* to keep you abreast on the latest happenings in the software industry.

Each and every month, you can expect to find the latest and greatest selection of fully tested game demos. In fact, many of the demos are interactive, allowing you to play the game over the course of several levels. If that weren't enough though, we regularly include the most up-to-the-minute game patches, save games and yes, even custom designed scenarios for many of today's most popular games.

To install: Place the CD demo disk in your CD-ROM drive, switch to that drive, then type "SPLUS".

Disclaimer: Upon installation of this CD-ROM, the user waives any and all liabilities, whether expressed or implied, against *Strategy Plus Inc.* or any of its affiliate operations. For your computer's safety, we always recommend virus scanning all software before installation.

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS DEMO

Wing Commander IV
BioForge Plus
Origin

Command & Conquer
Screamer
Virgin

Pitfall
Activision

Steel Panthers
Su-27 Flanker
Fantasy General
SSI

SimTower
Maxis

I Have No Mouth
and I Must Scream
Cyberdreams

Fighter Duel
Phillips Media

Pinball World
21st Century

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GENie

Knight Moves
Spectrum HoloByte

Lemmings 3D
Psygnosis

The Hive
Trimark

Destruction Derby
Wipeout
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Slideshow
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America Online

Tempest 2000
Atari

Playmates
Into the Void


& much,
much more...

CD-ROM 63



We recommend that you first check the "read me" text files included within the subdirectory of each game. Each file contains the appropriate technical support hotline in case you do have a problem installing the game. We regret that *Strategy Plus* can not help you regarding any installation problems. Thanks and enjoy!

Interested parties can obtain this issue's CD-ROM disk by mailing a check or money order for \$3 to cover shipping and handling to: *Strategy Plus, Inc.* P.O. Box 21, Hancock, VT 05748. Please indicate which demo (indicate issue number) you are requesting. Sorry, no phone orders will be accepted. Defective CD's will be replaced free of charge by mailing only the CD-ROM disk to the address above. Replacements and/or new orders require four to six weeks for delivery.



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Reader Service No. 26

UPFRONT

There's more at the door

First order of business: I'd like to welcome our regular writers Cynthia (Cindy) Yans and Scott Udell to our full-time staff here at *Strategy Plus* and over at *Interactive Entertainment*. Cindy and Scott will be our main contact folks for adventures/CRPGs and strategy/wargames respectively from here on out, as new Adventure and Strategy Associate Editors. Peter Smith has moved on up to the position of Managing Editor for *Interactive Entertainment*, but will still contribute regularly to the pages of our mag. Steve Bauman, continuing as our Managing Editor, will be taking on a more transcendental role at *S+*, with more time devoted to making sure our burgeoning enterprise runs like a well-oiled machine (of course he'll still be writing, like all the rest of us; we're totally hands on here). Steve B.'s administrative talents and enthusiasm are *sine qua non*; if you see us staying timely, focused, with the kinds of articles you'd like to read on the kinds of games you, as devoted gamers, like to play, chalk it up to Steve's efforts at coordinating and managing the magazine's day-to-day affairs. I remain, as always, your devoted servant, the Editor, focused primarily on sims, my main joy. 'Nuff said.

And now, the rest of it, the monthly burble: we've reached it – the techno-plateau. Yeah, there'll continue to be technological advances in graphics, sound, presentation, interface, etc. but for now, the pure "oooooh!" factor generated by being able to do 3-D graphics or full-motion video is gone. People expect this kind of stuff to be relatively transparent in the software they receive, and aren't likely to be moved to ecstasies simply because it's happening any more. Some day, yeah, when we have terabytes of storage and fast transfer techniques there'll be the same kind of competition over video resolution and technical quality there is now around frame rates for 3-D-style entertainment software. But for now, that's definitely on the back burner.

Which leaves us with... what? Is doing video in a game by definition doomed to failure? Obviously not – there are moments when even the worst passive, FMV designs are worth *watching*, at the very least. In some upcoming designs (some of which will have already shipped prior to your seeing this), the people in control of putting everything together have finally figured out that *integrating* video into the overall design, instead of making it the main feature, is a more appropriate thing to do. Expect video technology to shrink from the cinematic ambitions of the past few years to something more appropriately sized for the medium, as just one more component in the arsenal of what game designers can draw upon to tell a story, or simulate some phenomenon or historical situation, or create resource management or strategy games (or all of the above).

Similarly, we can expect "3-D" to change from the main focus of the gameworld environment to one factor enabling other issues in a game's design. The "wow" will no longer be just the fact that you can move freely, plausibly and realistically through a (more or less) three-dimensional world, but the fact that you can play a game which *makes use of* that kind of three-dimensional capability to perform other, more traditional tasks.

The acting in FMV games has been cheesy not because the actors have necessarily been bad, nor only because the directing and scripting have been amateurish (though all *have* been the case one time or another); it's been cheesy, I suspect, because no-one has yet envisioned a way to make the medium inevitable on its own terms, for the purpose of storytelling, or dramatization, or for the purpose of full-scale enactment of one sort or another (be it simulated, historical or whatever). As a personal example, there's nothing intrinsically gripping about *Star Trek: Voyager™* for me, though I enjoy the TV program. The character of the doctor, however, has saved the entire show for me because clearly the actor, director and the writers are all fully engaged with the fleshing out of this amusing persona – one which could only be conceived in the form he takes in the kind of situation *ST:V* creates for him. The doctor in *ST:V*, in other words, is charismatic because all those involved in his creation are making use of the nature of his unique situation for the development of his character (both fictionally and technically). Similarly, those moments in computer game cinematics which have proven gripping have been so because, suddenly, what the character is doing – *in the kind of unique world s/he's operating in in a computer game* – makes absolute sense. The characterization and story are motivated by the circumstances of the medium, in other words. That happens only rarely, but could certainly happen more, depending on whether the writers, directors and actors involved can change their approaches to the medium to suit it or not.

Along the same lines, the interaction possible in 3-D games, simulations, strategy and wargames has so far been pretty limited primarily because the concentration – not due now to technological so much as imaginative limitations – has been primarily on the hardware and not enough on storytelling and dramatization. There's no reason, given the resources available these days for the development of a major software title, why we couldn't have equally good gameplay and storytelling elements existing side by side in almost any genre of gaming so far conceived. There are ways to tell a story in a wargame. There are ways to dramatize the conflict in a conflict simulation (be it vehicle-based or not). There are ways to re-create history in a fashion that makes reference to more than the equipment and name personalities involved. There are ways to keep the core strengths of any 3-D action game and yet involve it in a story or evolving situation that's as sophisticated as anything happening in any other visual arts medium.

So I say, goodbye to adventure games; goodbye to simulations; goodbye to CRPGs; and goodbye to strategy and wargames. We're at the point now where the technology's in place to integrate any of the elements traditionally present in any of these genres to produce something totally new. If it's done well, it'll be humanly involving, it'll be profoundly educational about any of the realities it touches upon, it will put the player not in front row centre but at the active and hands-on core of a sophisticated world, made up of real storytelling, gripping dramatization, fully-realized simulation of real-world phenomena or equipment, and, if so desired, with historical or social or economic facets that will take thought and analysis and understanding (and, dare we say it, even research!) to come to terms with. Now *that* sounds fun, – doesn't it? ♦

Steve Wartofsky, Editor

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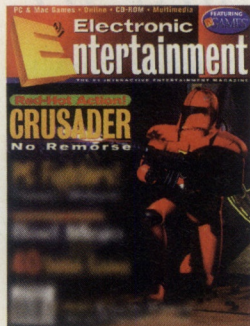
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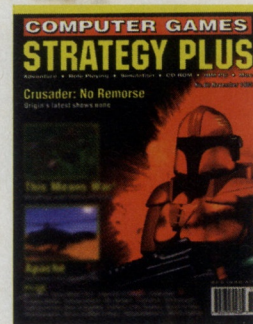
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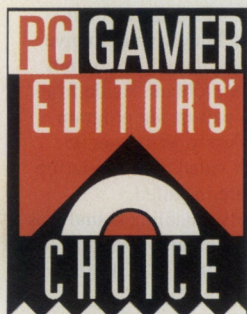
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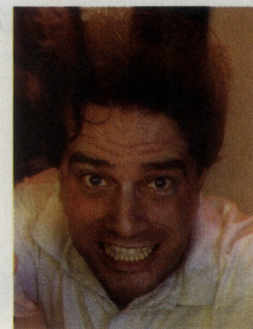
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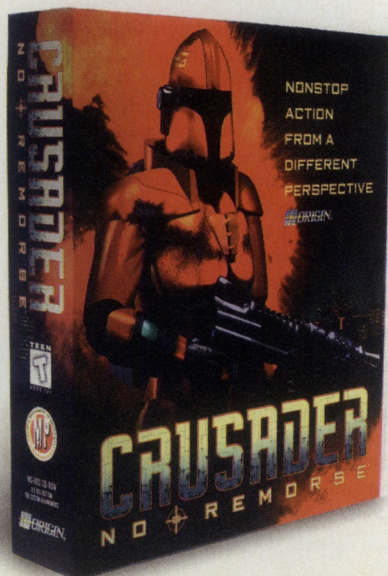
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Reader Service No. 103

The News

The 3D revolution *Diamond ships the first 3D*

Blame it on CGA. The PC was a first class text-based machine until the arrival of the rudimentary four color graphics card called CGA. The evolution of the PC as a graphics-based computer has been slow and fraught with peril (Standards? We don't need no stinkin' standards).

Diamond Multimedia has fired the first volley in the latest desktop graphic revolution for the PC – 3D graphics acceleration. Designed exclusively for gaming under Windows 95, the **Edge 3D** utilizes the *Nvidia NV1* chipset to provide fast polygon rendering, quadratic texture mapping (perspective correct), and special effects like diffused lighting, specular highlights, reflection mapping and alpha blending for fog, smoke and transparency. These are many of the features found in the new high-end console systems like the PlayStation.

The card is also a standard Windows 2D accelerator, with aver-

age performance. But wait, there's more. It's also a sound card, offering digital sound and full wavetable MIDI, and has a digital gameport and a *Sega Saturn* port for Saturn peripherals. The card ships with *Sega's* stunning **Virtua Fighter Remix** and *Papyrus's* **NASCAR Racing**. A version of *Interplay's* **Descent** is promised as well (you can mail in a card to receive it when it's available).

The PCI-based card is plug-and-play compatible, but as the included README file states, not all plug-and-play BIOS' are created equal. On our test machine we had to give the card an interrupt, which did not turn out to be a problem. Aside from this, the video part of the program installed seamlessly. Windows 95 detected a new video card on startup and drivers were installed.

Unfortunately, enabling sound was not as smooth. In theory, Window 95 should have detected a "PCI multi-

Escape to the Woods

A virtual unknown a year ago, Sanctuary Woods is becoming a home for adventurers lost in a sea of mediocre interactive movies

What happens when a producer of top-notch children's games decides to try their hand at "real" games? In the case of *Sanctuary Woods*, the answer is something special. They've built a team of creative talent which has allowed them to produce their first batch of games in an incredibly short amount of time; the polish exhibited thus far has been nothing short of remarkable.

In the last three years, *Sanctuary Woods* has seen their revenue grow from \$500,000 to \$6.2 million. In that time they've developed their own proprietary adventure game development environment, M4DS (a near-complete re-write of a system developed at *MicroProse* for its adventure game line a few years back). This software will allow *Sanctuary Woods* to develop titles considerably more quickly than

other companies. The latest task their programmers are working on is converting the engine from DOS to Windows 95 (their next title, **Orion Burger**, will likely ship with both DOS and Win95 versions on the same CD).

If one thing became clear from spending a few days at the company's Victoria, British Columbia-based studio it's that first and foremost they're a group of hard-core gamers, with a firm grasp on what makes a quality game. One of the benefits of developing in Canada is its seemingly never-ending talent pool as, unlike in the US, the government supports the arts. This has allowed them to recruit some of the most talented artists and animators in gaming.

With their latest title in the *Predator* series, **Lion** out the door as this issue went to press, we will not be seeing any new titles until early 1996, the first being the tasty **Orion Burger**. It's a fast food adventure with a whacked-out premise and incredible hand-drawn cel animation. Next month you can read all about the making of this hilarious game, one that may inspire you to join the Planet Huggers and protest the harvesting of intelligent life in the universe for burgers (don't ask, just wait until next month).

Down the road in 1996, there will be a number of new adventures for all types of gamers. There will be a horror game with an in-house design and a script by professional writers, and Robert Ripley will return in



Orion Burger

another adventure designed by **Riddle of Master Lu** author Lee Sheldon (see his article "Stalking the Wild Gamestory," on page 24 for his insight into game design).

While many companies are betting that a lot of live-action video and/or flashy graphics with less gameplay and more controversy will attract a bigger market to their product, *Sanctuary Woods* believes exactly the opposite. They're banking that gamers really want better games, period, so they're not resorting to cynical ploys to attract attention to their products (note that their products are mostly devoid of violence, for instance). Of course, the designers are not forgetting those stunning visuals, or the use of cutting-edge video to augment a design. Even a cursory glance at **Buried in Time** or **Riddle of Master Lu** shows that *Sanctuary Woods* is meeting its goals – now it's up to the market to discover them. ■

has arrived at last *accelerator for the PC*

media adapter" but didn't, requiring the card to be manually added via the "Add new hardware" control panel. After some minor tweaking, we had sound. Once up and running, the sound quality is superb, both for MIDI music and digital samples.

While the **Edge 3D** works as advertised, the lack of **Sound Blaster** compatibility and mediocre DOS VGA performance makes this for Windows die-hards only. But a bigger problem with it is that the machine requirements for running 3D software in Windows are just as ridiculous as those for DOS. 3D cards were going to save us from having to upgrade our CPU every year to play the latest and greatest games. The requirement for **Virtua Fighter Remix** is a Pentium 75, and 16 MB of RAM is highly recommended. **NASCAR Racing** shows the same performance under Windows as it does in SVGA under DOS — that is, full detail is only pos-

sible on the fastest machines.

NASCAR you know about, but **Virtua Fighter** is a revelation. It makes **FX Fighter** and many other games that utilize 3D characters look downright primitive. It's a perfect recreation of the arcade game, and the technology demonstrated could find its way into other types of games, from **X-COM** style strategy games to CRPGs.

Unfortunately, what makes this a questionable purchase is the old chicken and egg problem. Without 3D software it's a decent video/sound card combo, but without a bunch of these boards out there there's little reason for developers to support it (ask *Matrox* owners, who've had some 3D acceleration for a couple of years). Give them a year and see if all of the companies that have pledged support come through. ■

Edge 3D 2200XL
Diamond Multimedia
408.325.7000



Virtua Fighter Remix



NASCAR Racing

Sierra acquires Papyrus

IndyCar developer latest to join the family

In something of a surprise move, **Sierra On-Line** has acquired **Papyrus Design Group**, developer of the award-winning **IndyCar Racing** and **NASCAR Racing** simulations. To fund the latest purchase of a Massachusetts-based developer (Sierra purchased Boston-based *Impressions* during the summer), Sierra issued 1.4 million shares of Common Stock.

Papyrus was a prime candidate for a merger of some sorts, as they are an extremely focused company with an incredible track record. **NASCAR Racing** has sold over 350,000 units since its release in October of 1994. **IndyCar Racing II** was just released at press time by **Papyrus**' at that time current distributor, **Virgin Interactive**.

The move puts **Sierra** at the top of another gaming genre, and would keep the **Dynamix** division from having to develop a 3D and physics engine had they chosen to



IndyCar Racing II

enter the racing arena. The current plan is for **Papyrus** to start releasing titles under the **Sierra** name in 1996, including additional racing games (**NASCAR Racing II** being the most likely candidate). They will, however, finish a product they've been co-developing with **Electronic Arts**, a Windows 95 conversion of the superb 3DO action racing game **Road Rash**. ■

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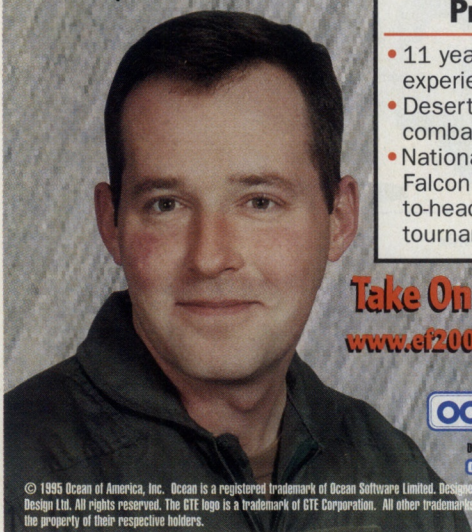


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it's just like
being there."

— Diehard, Harrisburg, PA
ahip@aol.com



- 11 years real flight experience
- Desert Storm combat duty
- National director of Falcon 3.0 head-to-head network tournament

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Reader Service No. 103

The future at Domark

Mergers add technology and strength to their lineup

In October of 1995, *Domark* merged with three companies, *Eidos*, *Simis* and *Big Red Software*, to form a holding group, called *Eidos Plc*. The financing and synergy generated may move *Domark* into the top rank of gaming companies. The merger took four companies, *Domark*,. It raised \$10 million and upped the employee count to 130 people. Each company brings special talents and technologies to the group. *Domark* contributes as a game developer and publisher, *Simis* provides a new, extremely powerful 3D graphics engine. *Big Red* focuses on producing original software. *Eidos* supplies a video compression product known as *Eidos Software Code* or "ESC."

With all this talent and technology under one roof, we checked in with *Domark's* top leadership to get a glimpse of the future. For the view from the head shed, we talked with

Dominic Wheatley, co-founder of *Domark*, COO of *Eidos Plc* and CEO of *Domark Software*. To get on the six of future flight games, we quizzed Bryan Walker, head of the Flight Sim Development Team. For a look at the future visual splendor of their upcoming titles, we cornered Colin Boswell, Technical Director and specialist in graphics.

Strategy Plus: What are the advantages to the merger?

Dominic Wheatley: A major advantage is the swapping of technology. *Simis* has this wonderful 3D engine. We have *Terracide* running on the engine using the *Rendition* 3D card; it looks quite stunning. The engine can be used by any team in the group. Similarly, *Eidos* has the data compression system, *ESC*, which makes amazing improvements in the graphics of our games. *Big Red Software* is excellent at making

The last of the independents

With merger mania sweeping the industry, *Sir-tech* flies solo

With the cost of games escalating into the millions (with *Wing Commander IV* setting a dangerous precedent), many of the smaller developers are joining forces with the big publishers to increase their market presence and/or their budgets (see *Sierra buys Papyrus* elsewhere). Others do it to gain access to better art and film departments.

Sir-tech has forgone that particular route, opting instead to be one of the few independent players in an increasingly corporate-dominated industry. They're one of the veterans of the industry, having produced a little title called *Wizardry - Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord* back in 1981. They've never recovered from that initial success. It's haunted them all the way through the award winning *Wizardry 7 - Crusaders of the Dark Savant*. In between, they've had success with their other role-playing series, the *Realms of Arkania*. They also scored a critical hit with the genre-busting *Jagged Alliance*, a strategy game which built on their role-playing skills.

What's in their future? A couple of days spent at their Ogdensburg, New York office revealed a company still committed to delivering serious gaming experiences gamers themselves can shape. As Robert Sirotek, head of *Sir-tech*, said in a letter to the gaming community, "We are grateful for your input and, as always, take your comments very seriously. . . After all, it's those same comments throughout

our 14 years that have helped us to create the legend *Wizardry* has become."

Down the road in 1996 and beyond, *Sir-tech* has a number of new products. Early in the year you'll see the latest and great *Realms of Arkania* game, *Shadows Over Riva*. Each release has seen an incremental increase in both gameplay and technology; this latest installment is no exception. Previous games have had a tile-based 3D movement engine. Now it's true 3D, including the objects that populate the areas. The engine allows you to look up and down and the terrain has hills, valleys, water and buildings for the player to explore. A detailed plot and an improved combat system round out the highlights.

Also on the way is *Wizardry Gold*, a revamping of *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* for Windows 95, 3.1, and NT and the Macintosh. It's not just a straight port of that title. The graphics have been redone in high-resolution SVGA, the music and sound have been improved, a hint guide will be available on-line, and the Windows version will have wallpaper, icons and sound effects for that *Wizardry* desktop.

Another *Wizardry* spin-off for '96 will be *Nemesis - A Wizardry Adventure*, a single-character first-person role-playing adventure. Like the just-released *Druid*, *Nemesis* will serve as an introduction to the more hard-core role-playing found in *Riva* or *Wizardry*. The



Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure

principle design is being handled by *Jagged Alliance* co-designer Linda Currie. We'll have more on this title next month. Also in '96 we'll be seeing two *Jagged Alliance* products, the first being the *Head-to-Head* network and modem version, and later *Jagged Alliance Gold*, which will be a Windows 95 product.

You'll have to wait for the big one. *Wizardry 8* will not be released until the first quarter of 1998. The design is being fleshed out as we write; *Sir-tech* is ramping up on all of the latest and greatest technology to bring it to life. But they will be careful not to compromise on the essence of what a *Wizardry* game is, and what continues to make the series huge (especially in Japan, where they have songs, videos, movies, and all sorts of odd *Wizardry* paraphernalia).

With nary an interactive movie in their development cycle, *Sir-tech* continues to emphasize in-depth gameplay and design, certainly a refreshing change of pace from the technology-driven beast the industry has become. Someone's gotta do it; it's no surprise it's an independent. ■

games. So the games people and the technology people are all thriving together, sharing ownership of the company and all on the same playing field.

The best thing about the merger, though, is what it will do for gamers. **Domark**, with \$10 million behind it, can acquire new titles, even better engines and market them more effectively. We now have a Simulation line with both sci-fi and flight sims, as well as an Action/Adventure line. The results of these vastly expanded development efforts are great new games such as **Total Mayhem** (working title), **Deathtrap Dungeon**, **Terracide**, **Flying Nightmares 2** and **AH-64 Apache**. These games will provide fun and excitement to our customers while "pushing the envelope" in graphics.

What will this new ESC video compression do for Domark games?

Colin Boswell: What it will do is give full screen video with really high quality graphics at an excellent frame rate. We can now do better video using software than most people can manage in hardware. It'll be cheaper for the consumer, too. You won't need to add a hardware card. The average machine will run much more complex video quite well. It'll work for online games too, although noisy phone lines and different speed modems complicate things on another order of magnitude entirely. We're working on that at the moment. So, we'll have much more realistic video and produce a much higher quality game because of ESC.

What are the new goals for the Flight Sim Team?

Bryan Walker: Simply to present games that people can believe; we want to take involvement up to the next level. We now have the graphics engine, flight modeling and everything else we need to stand with the major companies. We want to add the personal level of appeal, to convince the player that "yes, I am a Harrier pilot." We'll do it by providing the small nuances that people who have never been in the military will appreciate and relate to. We call it a "living environment." It reacts to your "cause" by generating realistic "effects." For example, shoot a bad guy and you'll be able to fly over the wreckage the next day; take out a bridge and you'll have to deal with engineers trying to rebuild it. Those are the kinds of things which get people to believe and say, "yeah, this is real, I'm in a world."

What effect will the 3D Graphics Accelerator Cards have at Domark? Which cards should we gamers be considering?

BW: We are looking forward to showing the public what we can do with a 3D graphics card. These are the most revolutionary things to ever hit the PC for games. They take so much load off the machine. You're basically looking at twice the detail, 20,000 times the colors and twice the frame rate, all in the same game, same machine. The only difference is the graphics card. Our new engines running on the 3D cards have to be seen to be believed; they make the games incredibly realistic! **CB:** We feel that we're in the vanguard of publishers working in 3D graphics. Unfortunately, every chip seems to have its advantages and disadvantages; I don't think there is one chip that will be all things to all people. I suspect that may never happen. It's a very crowded marketplace and it may take time for a clear leader to emerge.

What's the status of Confirmed Kill?

BW: We've reached an agreement in principle with an online service to offer it. It will be considerably less expensive than what people are used to paying. After our experience with *ICI's* environment and after playing **Air Warrior** for years, we've decided that formula does not work. So, we're doing a complete reformat of the game.

It'll have a fast play set up with scenarios, individual missions and duels. It will pack maximum action into the minimum time. **Confirmed Kill** will have total realism for those who want it and the complete lack of realism for those who don't. It'll be a point and click interface, offering 24-36 elaborate scenarios, all starting within sight of the enemy. Up to 48 players can join in a scenario, fight the fight, sort out who won and try it again. Players can also move on to one of the other scenarios or set up a free form dog-fight. They'll get instant feedback; they can check their score, their number of hits, how much damage they did, how they stack up against other people on line. The biggest thing is to just let people have as much fun as they want.

Here's what's coming from Domark:

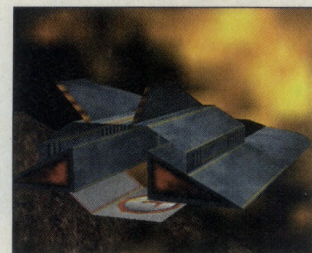
Big Red Racing: PC multiplayer racing game with a twist. Split screen 2 player modem competition with 12 vehicles, 18 tracks and 6 terrain types. Six player IPX net-

work linking as well. Supports several virtual headsets. Your backhoe against my lunar buggy on Mars. **Total Mayhem** (working title): An early Spring PC release. Futuristic fight against mechanoids with 3D combat. Multiple terrain, 65 different enemies, 10 weapons and the ability to control 6 fighters at once. Head to head via modem and 4 player via Win95 networks.

Terracide: Renegade, self-replicating robot sets out to destroy all organic life and Earth picks you to save her. PC space combat strategy game that also features air to air and hand to hand combat using 16-bit 65,000 color 3D game engine. Specifically designed for the next generation 3D graphics cards, **Terracide** will showcase **Domark's** graphics and Artificial Intelligence technology this Spring.

Deathtrap Dungeon: The first in a new PC line of **Domark** Fighting Fantasy 3D adventure games. Based on the dungeon adventure gamebooks created by Ian Livingston, Chairman of **Eidos Plc.** Face the evil Baron Sukumvit in a dungeon labyrinth, furiously killing monsters and dodging traps. Strategy and role-playing elements offer more than combat. Spring of '96 release.

Flying Nightmares 2, a modern flight sim and strategy wargame for the PC and MAC follows in the Fall of '96. **AH-64A Apache** will arrive about the same time. More on those later. ■



Beautiful shading and detail on a Terracide ship



A monster's eye view of the wrong side of the sword in **Deathtrap Dungeon**



Mechanoid **Total Mayhem**: Control 6 Freedom Fighters and wreak havoc on the merciless mechs of the IRC overlords

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Reader Service No. 103

F-16 Fighting Falcon

**Digital Integration
and Interactive
Magic get ready to
roll out the latest
near-perfect air
combat simulation**

by Steve Wartofsky

Where do you go after the success of an **Apache**? *Digital Integration* and *Interactive Magic* both feel secure enough about the quality of the technology they're developing to scale the ultimate peak of air combat simulation design. Their next project is nothing less than a simulation of the F-16. **F-16 Fighting Falcon** goes where both no-one and everyone has gone before; no-one's yet come up with the accurate, full-scaled F-16 combat sim. Seems like almost everyone's tried.

Why the F-16? Simply put, it remains – almost twenty years later – the ultimate multirole fighter in the world's arsenal. Its balance of capability (air-air and air-ground, attack and defense, close-in and long-range), performance (nothing outmaneuvers it) and economy (it's one of the cheaper aircraft to both produce and maintain) is almost perfect. More advanced technologies have arrived since the F-16's inception, but nothing in actual design to compete with the overall strengths of this plane has yet been conceived or produced. Other, more specialized aircraft have since been conceptualized and manufactured, but none have achieved the range of abilities of the F-16.

That's a serious challenge for a simulation designer, PC-based or no; it means you have to work on a model which can handle everything from close-in, guns-only air-air

combat to long-range, advanced electro-optically-controlled night-time bombing runs. It means you have to produce flight dynamics which will give the player some feel for the incredible combination of speed, power and maneuverability that is the F-16. It's gotta feel like nothing else out there. It's gotta feel precise, and fast.

The challenge of trying to take on the entirety of the F-16's mission capabilities also means the modeling of a vast array of weapons and situations. Which means constructing some of the most complex mission scenarios, too – the F-16, to demonstrate its real capabilities, is not a plane to put up against a few SA-7s (even if you make them near-impossible to avoid, as was the case with **Falcon 3.0**); it's a plane to pit against the best air and ground defenses the world has to offer.

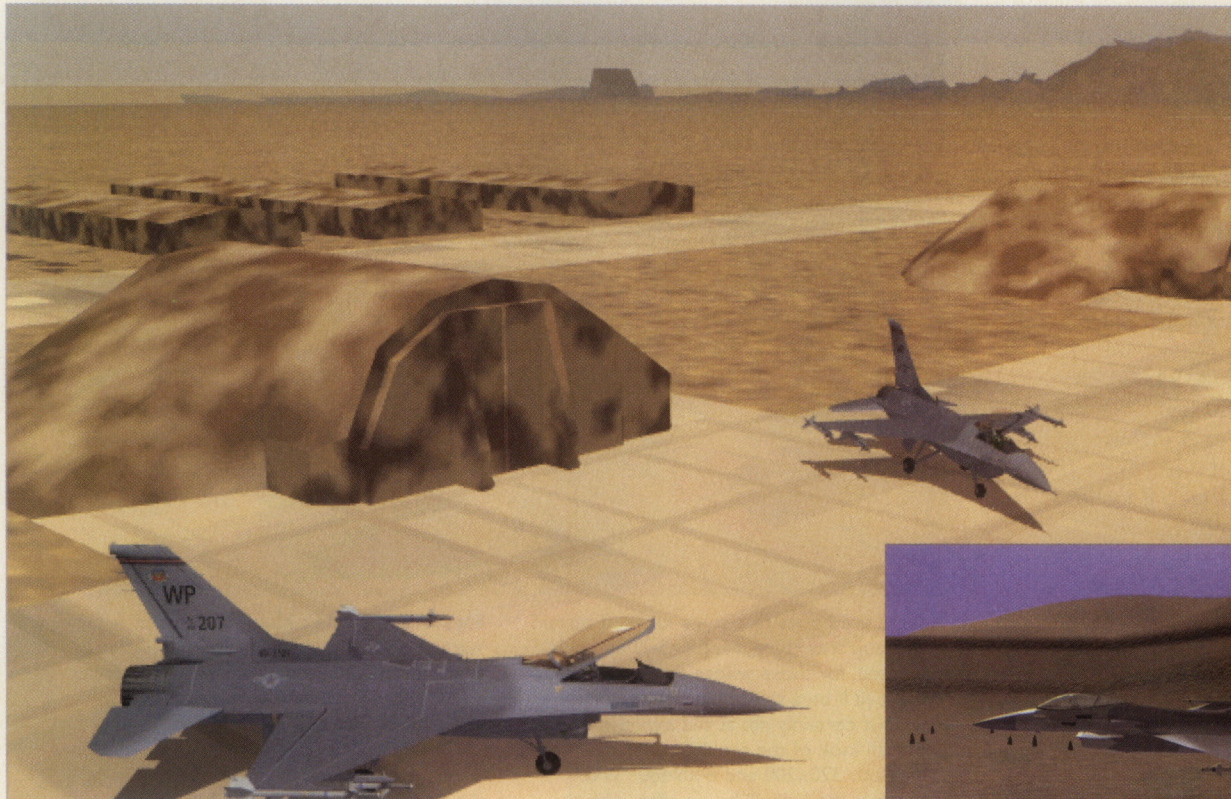
Who could do all that, and do it well? How about *Digital Integration* and *Interactive Magic*? The DI guys are more than just game and simulation designers; in an industry showcasing an incredible variety of talent these days, Rod Swift and David Marshall stand out as real artists in their genre of choice. They *know* everything about how to put together a PC-based simulation, combining both realism and playability without making major concessions on either side of that difficult equation. **Apache** proved that. And the team has had the good fortune of pairing up with *Interactive Magic*, a company

Above: Capture the moment

Below: Alright, so this is just the prefs screen – puts you in the mood, at least, eh?



**Photographs courtesy of Lockheed Martin
All screenshots are preliminary artwork**



that itself is unusual in the industry these days, in that it's committed to real fun for serious gamers, without all the excess techno-fluff everyone else is churning out to stuff up a 650MB CD-ROM.

Getting down to business

But don't just take our word for it, think about **Apache** and then take a look at where **DI** and **I-Magic** are going with that system. Yes, we'll have the range of training, single, two- and multi-player (network only) mission structure we saw before, but now with both campaign and command systems that expand on what is available in the chopper sim. The Campaign will be structured dynamically, so that the player's successes and failures across a series of different missions will aggregate over time to lead to eventual success or failure in the overall campaign. Campaigns will be very replayable, since the number of possible routes through same is extremely variable. The Command approach will feature a multi-mission scenario, where each scenario is linked to the next. You'll start the next mission with the circumstances the success or failure of your previous mission generated, and thus have a real sense you're constructing your own gameworld as you proceed. Both Campaign and Command will be available in all the included theatres (the Gulf, India/Pakistan border and Europe are the three planned so far), making for an epic range of gameworld options to work with.

With **Apache**, your technical role is primarily to provide tactical support to forces on the ground and in the air – under such circumstances, controlling the details of your mission planning aren't critical the way they are when you're in command of a multi-role fighter like the F-16. **DI** has taken

that tactical difference into account and has decided to provide a full-scale, detailed mission planner, which will both open up existing missions to editing and allow complete construction of new missions by the player. A truly advanced option in this kind of simulation, **DI/I-Magic's** mission planner will allow the player to control both waypoint locations and timings, and the kinds of tasking necessary to construct effective missions. Even transport and supply can be managed with this system, to move both munitions and fuel between bases on the ground. In your command role, you'll thus be taking over the whole field of operations in a way you never could with **Apache**.

What types of missions will players be able to look forward to? Oh, only everything the F-16 can do – battlefield support, search and destroy, search and rescue, recon, anti-ship and anti-sub, sea-borne raid or invasion, tactical support (of course), air-air combat with both fixed and rotary wing aircraft, point attack of ground targets, and escort. Almost 50 different mission types in total will be available, and will be supplemented – the gods of the Mysteries of Modem and Network Play Technology willing – by the one-on-one or wingman/leader mission types in modem mode, and one-on-one, team death match and "capture the flag" mission types in up-to-sixteen-player network mode. None of this is written in stone, of course, and will change as the team focuses its priorities on what works best. We're sure, though, that the majority of the above plans will come to fruition.

The graphics and sound technology for **F-16 Fighting Falcon** continues to be very much oriented around accessibility and enjoyment for the widest possible variety of players and equipment. As of this writing

'The challenge of trying to take on the entirety of the F-16's mission capabilities also means the modeling of a vast array of weapons and situations. Which means constructing some of the most complex mission scenarios, too ...'



Top: I want this one blown up for my wall!

Middle: The F-16, the world's best multirole fighter

Bottom: Not a good time to go afterburner

The F-16

Primary Function: Multi-role fighter

Builder: General Dynamics Corporation

Power Plant: F-16A/B: one Pratt & Whitney F100-PW-200 turbofan engine with afterburner; F-16 C/D: one P&W F100-PW-200/220 or GE F110-GE-100 turbofan engine with afterburner

Thrust: F-16A/B, 24,000 lbs;

F-16C/D, 27,000 lbs

Length: 49 feet, 5 inches

Height: 16 feet

Wingspan: 32 feet, 8 inches

Speed: 1,500mph

(Mach 2 at sea level)

Ceiling: above 50,000 feet

Maximum Takeoff Weight:

37,500 lbs

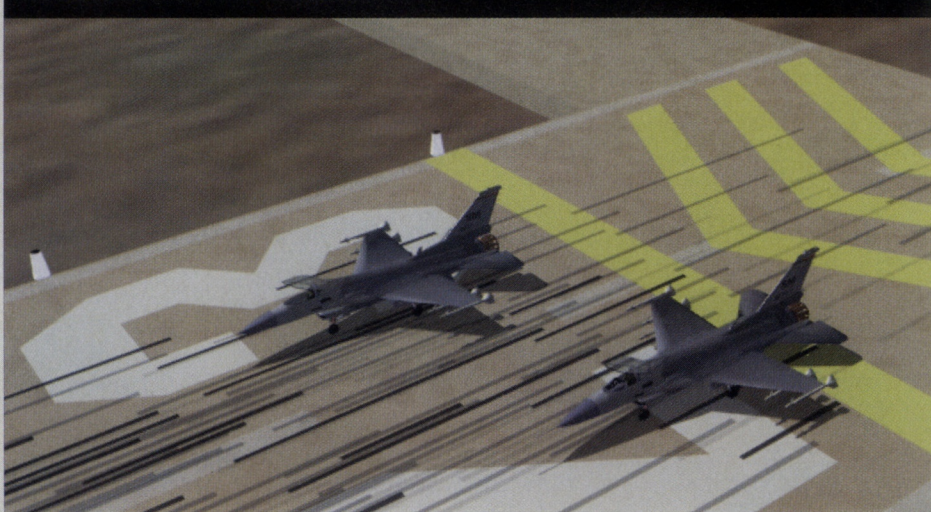
Range: More than 2,000 miles

ferry range

Armament: One M-61A1 20mm multibarrel cannon with 500 rounds; external stations can carry up to six AIM-9 infrared missiles, conventional air-air and air-surface munitions and electronic countermeasure pods

Date Deployed: January 1979

Burning rubber takes on new meaning in an F-16



there are hopes that some kinds of terrain and object texture-mapping will be implemented, for those whose systems can handle it (it'll be a selectable option, fortunately), but certainly *not* at the expense of the overall look of the simulation for the rest of us. Both 320x200 and 640x480 "SVGA" graphics modes will be on offer, with the full, realistic and accurate cockpit instrument implementation *DI* has become famous for. Seems to us the best use of SVGA generally these days has been to allow much more precise cockpit instrumentation – it's likely *DI/II-Magic* will go to town along such

lines with the F-16's multi-MFD setup. A full suite of both sound effects and radio chatter is also planned, including wingman, air traffic and forward air controller participation in the working-out of a mission.

One of the most extensively-planned portions of the design is, curiously enough, the weapons options for **F-16 Fighting Falcon**. *DI* have quite literally taken into account every possible weapons and day/night instrument and defensive system loading the F-16 can handle, and expanded that even further to an international scale. Veterans of previous F-16 sims will there-

Adrenalin



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Another cowboy rides off into the setting sun



fore have to learn some new, European weapons systems along with the classic AIM-9Ls and AGM-65Gs of yore. The ALQ-131 ECM Pod, the LANTIRN and the ATARS will also all be available for installation or not, making configuration of planes for the mission one of the major tasks to consider prior to departure.

It's nearly impossible to imagine anyone coming up with a more comprehensive F-16 simulation than the one *DI* and *I-Magic* have planned for us; and, given the legacy of **Apache**, we're sure this will be one of the most accurate-feeling as well as accu-

rate-performing modern-day air combat sims to show. As with **Apache**, you'll find yourself well-wrapped in a completely conceived set of situations, with fully-realized modeling and systems to work with, all of which will perform plausibly. What more could anyone ask for? **F-16 Fighting Falcon** will undoubtedly redefine the genre yet again, and give hot-blooded air combat enthusiasts an unbeatable combination to play with – which is as it should be, for any sim attempting to measure up to the real-world F-16 it's representing. ♦

Who is *Digital Integration*? It's Rod Swift, who's done no less than worked on the science and technology behind the development of real-world UK implementations of MIL-STD avionics data buses and digital airborne computers, prior to his 12-year career as a flight sim designer along with his long-term cohort, Dave Marshall. Marshall himself has had a career as well in the world of real fighter aircraft systems design prior to his commitment to PC-based simulation, and has participated in projects at Hawker Siddeley, Boscombe Down, Westland Helicopters and Farnborough. He also has flight experience with both fixed- and rotary-wing military aircraft.

If left to their own devices these guys would probably bring a Lynx (chopper) cockpit directly to your PC without concern for playability; *Interactive Magic* has thus had the important role of keeping *DI* focused on the fun alongside the simulation (we exaggerate slightly, of course – *DI*'s been making games for 12 years!). *I-Magic*'s been directly involved in the day-to-day progress of *DI*'s work since the two companies teamed up. While the CEOs of other, bigger software corporations are off holding meetings, Bill Stealey's busy testing out and evaluating the work he sees coming in. Everyone else at *I-Magic* plays a similar role, and stays actively involved in the work as it progresses. They're all very excited about *DI*'s next sim.

What you fear, you will covet.
What you loathe, you will worship.
What you ravage, you will rule.
What you are, you will abandon.

INTO THE VOID

The first net-capable, intergalactic, PC CD-ROM game of ultimate strategy.

You've been warned.

Reader Service No. 111

drivers, start your engines...

Since many people are banking on the existence of an elusive and fickle mass market for PC gaming, certain truths have become self-evident. First-off, no one really claims to actually like interactive movies, but they sure move a lot of units. Second, driving games are really popular. Why is this? While the first point leaves us scratching our heads, the second one is easier to address. It's something that everyone can relate to. Most of the masses find war and strategy games too abstract (hexes?), adventure games too frustrating (I use what where?), role-playing games too weird (orcs?) and flight simulators too complicated (I have to press what?).

Most people can walk up to a driving simulation and immediately feel comfortable. Driving with a joystick may be an acquired skill, but the whole concept of accelerating, braking, and turning is familiar enough for almost everyone to grasp. This is why the racing game has been a favorite on all platforms throughout the history of home gaming. Only recently have machines become powerful enough to deliver an experience that moves beyond **Pole Position**. In fact, today's simulations and arcade racing games are showcases for some of the best graphics, sound, and playability in all of gaming.

the simulation

It's easy to pick the one game that signaled a turning point in the racing genre, the one that showed what the future held (the **Falcon** of racing simulations, so to speak). Released back in 1989, **Papyrus' Indianapolis 500** was the most thorough and realistic driving and racing simulation ever released for any machine, and it served as a benchmark for all simulations to follow. How many players can vividly remember firing it up for the first time? You probably jumped into the practice mode and hammered the throttle in the pits, cranking the wheel to the right to get out on the track. And you promptly spun out. It probably took you hours, or possibly weeks, to drive consistent laps. Many people probably gave up before mastering **Indy 500**, but if they did they really missed out on a special program. To this day, despite its terrible (state of the art at the time) graphics, it remains eminently playable, and the car model is still nearly perfect.

A number of other games were released after **Indy 500** that failed miserably to make any sort of impact. You had another **Test Drive** and **Grand Prix Unlimited**, a couple of stock car simulations such as **Bill Elliot's NASCAR Challenge** and **Days of Thunder** (both had decent graphics at the time but lousy car models), and **Electronic Arts' own Indy** follow-up, the lousy **Mario Andretti Racing**. None of them came close to **Indy 500**.

the challenger

Until **World Circuit**, that is. When **MicroProse** released Geoff Crammond's Formula One simulation it was an immediate hit, and many racers finally wiped **Indy 500** off of their hard drives. **World Circuit** was easier to play than **Indy** and had the advantage of covering the entire F1 circus (and its superb tracks), but lacked a certain something when it came to the

modeling of the car (many went back to **Indy** after their initial enthusiasm over **World Circuit** dampened).

One of the most well received aspects of the program were the superbly modeled race tracks. The F1 circuits are famous for being unique, and **World Circuit** was able to

capture their character, right down to the legendary F1 curbing. Many people who had grown tired of driving around in circles in **Indy 500** decided that this was all they'd need.

Until **Papyrus** returned with **IndyCar Racing**, which turned the racing community on its collective helmet. With some of the best graphics seen in any simulation, physics that were uncannily accurate, and controls that once again

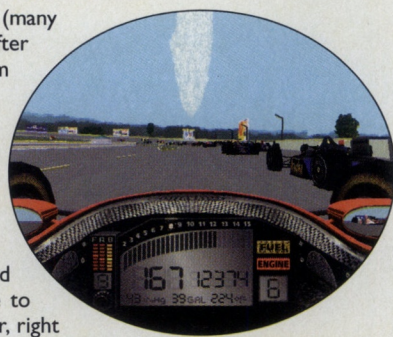
defined the genre, **IndyCar** was the new benchmark. **Papyrus** upped the ante a year later with **NASCAR Racing** and this month, **Papyrus** will be delivering **IndyCar Racing II** (previewed in the December issue), which brings the SVGA graphics of **NASCAR** and links to **Papyrus'** forthcoming on-line service to the party.

It will have competition in early 1996 in the form of **Spectrum HoloByte's** sequel to **World Circuit**,

Grand Prix II. It too will feature high-resolution graphics and even more detail and texturing while retaining much of the outright playability that the previous version had. The alpha version of the game shows the graphic improvements but feels like the same old handling engine underneath. It's certainly easier to drive than **IndyCar**, and the cars feel downright tossable in the turns. The game will feature 16 tracks, weather (the rain effect was particularly impressive in the prequel), driving aids, multiple levels of opponent ability (with much improved driver AI), and full pitching and rolling (cars tilt and spin when they hit the curbing – a spectacular looking effect).

from the arcade

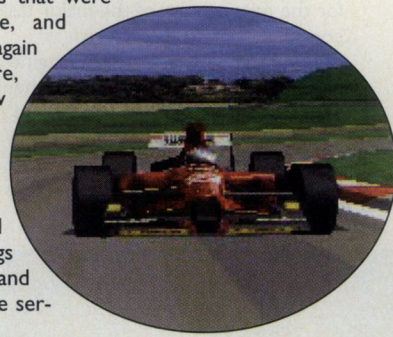
Back in the dark ages, there were a number of driving games that were inspired more by **Pole Position** than reality. The most popular race games had to be **Accolade's** series of **Test Drive** games, though they were more popular for the cars they made pretenses toward simulating than their actual gameplay.



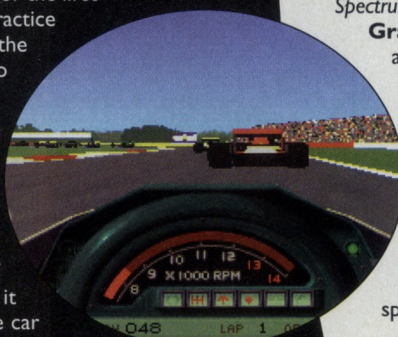
IndyCar Racing II



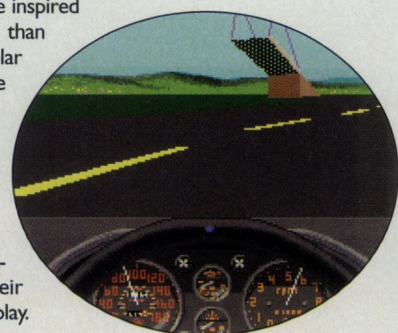
Indianapolis 500



Grand Prix II



World Circuit



Stunts

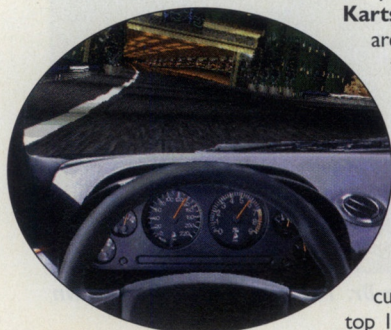
...from grand prix II to indycar screamer to destruction derby, the racing game has come of age



Whiplash

Old arcade racing games don't age particularly well because their main draw has always been visual and/or aural. A new generation of arcade game, best embodied by the arcade games **Virtua Racing**, **Ridge Racer** and **Daytona**, has some simulation in them — those lurid slides tell you that there's at least some physics going on under the hood. As such, they stand a chance of aging better than something like **Stunts**.

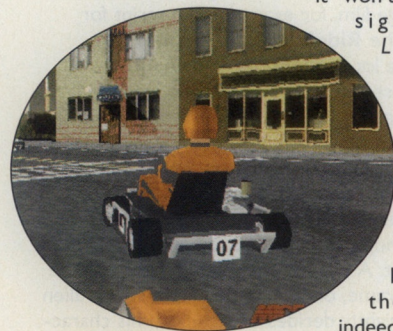
In fact, a modern version of **Stunts** would have to be **Interplay's** upcoming super stunt fest **Whiplash** (previewed last month). **MicroProse** has an entry called **Virtual Karts**, and just released



The Need for Speed

are **Virgin's** nearly perfect **Screamer** and **Sony's** staggeringly entertaining **Destruction Derby**.

Down the road don't be surprised to see PC versions of **Ridge Racer** and **Daytona**, as the line between the console and PC blurs even more. **Electronic Arts' The Need for Speed** is currently sitting on a number of top 10 sales charts, and finally, what about all of the fantasy racing games such as **Bullfrog's Hi-Octance**, **Sony's WipeOut** and **Spectrum's** upcoming **Ram Racer**? All of which points to a rosey future for the computer racing enthusiast. With 3D cards coming to the forefront (see the review of the **Diamond Edge 3D** and **NASCAR** for Windows 95 in the news) and PCs getting faster and faster, graphic realism won't be the problem. It will once again boil down to the intangibles, like track design and physics. Which brings us to this final thought: wouldn't it be spectacular if someone like **id** or **Looking Glass** threw their talent into a racing game like they did with **Flight Unlimited** (and don't think it won't happen —



Virtual Karts

sightings of **Looking Glass** employees at trade shows taking notes of racing titles have been confirmed)? A fabulous thought, indeed.

review Destruction Derby

designed by Dimensions
published by Sony
platform DOS

There is something incredibly gratifying about running into other cars (oh c'mon, you've turned on invincible mode in **IndyCar** or **NASCAR** and driven the wrong way... admit it). **Destruction Derby**, **Sony's** conversion of one of their benchmark PlayStation titles, is flat out the current king of all PC arcade racing games. It's shallow as hell, but what it lacks in depth it more than compensates for with incredible playability.

Why is **Destruction Derby** so good? Part of it is due to the crashing bit, but what really separates it from the pack is that it has a superb physics modeling of both the car and the crashes. Your car just feels right, and as a race wears on and you take more and more damage the handling begins to suffer. Dents appear, smoke billows (and it's transparent, for a particularly cool effect) and your steering goes to hell. Crashes are amazing. You really feel the hits as cars ricochet off of you in various directions. You'll duck, you'll swerve, you'll go "oooh," crowds will form around your desk to watch (and go "oooh"), and your neck will be sore for hours after playing.

There are multiple modes of play, from destruction races (where you get points for doing damage) to straight races (points for winning). The most fun in the game can be found in the destruction derby. It takes place in a circular ring, and it's absolute carnage and chaos.

The graphics are stunning, the sounds superbly crunchy, and the controls perfect. Negatives? The tracks are too narrow, there's not enough of them, the cars lack variety and the first-person view doesn't accurately show front end damage.

Criticism is futile. This game rules.

review Screamer

designed by Graffiti
published by Virgin
platform DOS

Virgin's Screamer is a surprise, coming from the developer of the less-than-stellar **Iron Assault**. **Graffiti**. This is one gorgeous game, with a blazingly fast 3D engine and detail previously seen only on high-end arcade games like **Ridge Racer** (its true 3D is superior to **Need for Speed's** fake 3D). The problem is with the details of the design — the game puts forth a pretty face but has little in the way of brains.

Which doesn't completely ruin the game. Far from it, in fact, as many hours of entertainment can be had here.

The game starts with three tracks, and as you win more tracks will become available. The tracks are stunning looking, with moving objects in the backgrounds (from carnivals to airplanes). Sound is stereo cued, so you hear cars (and the before-mentioned background objects) on the side that they appear.

The game has problems with the car model, as the cars tend toward uncontrollable oversteer at the merest hint of braking. An understeering car would be much easier to get a grip on (play this side-to-side with **Need for Speed**

Screamer

and you'll know what I mean here). One interesting flaw that this game shares with **Ridge Racer** is that downshifting lowers your speed without inflicting the sort of handling penalty braking does (since the car is unbreakable, downshifting should just cause your engine to overrev, forcing you to still brake).

Screamer turns out to be one arcade game that could have used a little bit more simulation. As it stands it's quite enjoyable, but it could have been a world beater with a little more attention to detail.

—steve bauman

The Art of Game Design:

a continuing series

Stalking the wild gamestory

by Lee Sheldon

What is it?

After his stint as Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger went to Israel to run a zoo. A reporter found out about this unusual career move, and went to see what was what. Arriving at the zoo he was startled to discover a cage containing a lion and lamb lying peacefully side by side. "Dr. Kissinger!" he exclaimed. "This is fantastic! Since biblical times men have tried to get the lion and lamb to lie down together. How can you have succeeded after so many over the centuries have failed?" To which Kissinger is said to have replied, "Every day a new lamb."

The Gamestory is a new creature born of the union between the lion and the lamb. The lion is interactivity. The lamb is story. Amongst all species the Gamestory is uniquely frail, and can only exist in captivity. Inside the computer. If one accepts the premise that story has a place in computer games, and more people seem to be doing that these days, we need to explore how to feed the lion without sacrificing the lamb, or the Gamestory will never even be born.

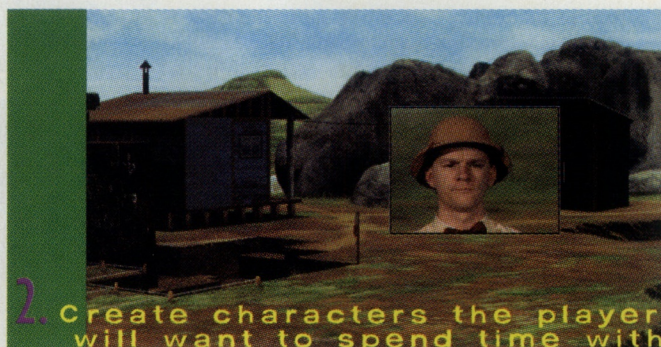
What is its natural habitat?

These days there is a trend toward simpler adventure games. The thinking behind this is that it makes the games more accessible to the mass market, that amorphous holy grail that promises, not life everlasting, but new gamers unending.

The Gamestory can not survive in an environment where interactivity has been clear-cut to a few withered stumps. It should thrive on player input. Making games shorter and simpler is certainly one of the easiest solutions I've ever heard for broadening a market base. Let's give them less! But all the evidence I've seen regarding what the con-

the power of storytelling. The story is the single thread that is woven through the entire fabric of what entertains us. The appreciation of a good story is not a gift granted to another species on this planet. It is reserved for Homo Sapiens alone.

The technology and manpower necessary to produce wonderful-looking computer games is available to whoever has the bucks to buy



Ripley looks hurt after Dr. Twelvetyrees puts him down

it, just as it is for the film producer. And just as most movies have a certain base level of polish to them, so can computer games.

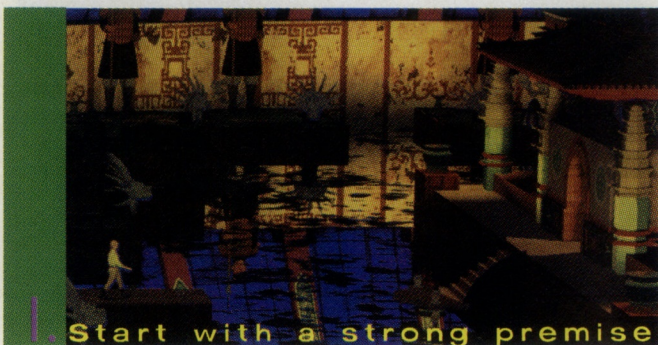
What then distinguishes a good game from all the rest? One way to do so is with story. Even the young Gamestories we are seeing these days will flourish, if properly reared.

Care and feeding of the gamestory

For a healthy Gamestory, start with a nutritious premise. That premise needs to take into account the medium for which it is intended. The Gamestory bred for an adventure game should be able to support all the puzzle-solving it requires, and should also be non-linear enough to provide options when the player gets stuck. It should be of at least equal weight to the other elements of the game: graphics, puzzles, sound, etc. It must be strong enough to drive through far more twists and hairpin turns than the average film, for example. The script for **Ripley's Believe It Or Not! The Riddle of Master Lu** is 844 pages. The Gamestory requires a lot of room to roam about in.

Finally, even a genre-specific premise needs to provide something more than all the stories in the genre that have come before. We must make the investment in the material. Find something in even the most cliché-ridden genre that speaks to us as human beings.

The character of Newt, and her relationship to Ripley (that other Ripley) in *Aliens* is the soul of the film. When Newt goes to sleep at the end, it is a profoundly satisfying moment. You can almost feel the audience begin to exhale, at least. A cheezier film would have had the alien lurch one more time into frame, or we'd cut to yet another alien egg opening, or... Jim Cameron rightly decides to give both his charac-



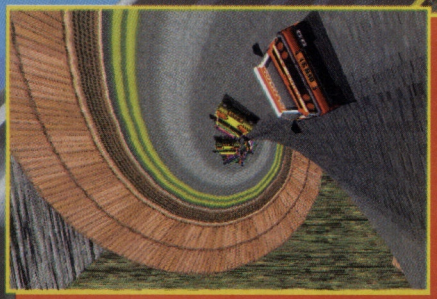
Ripley stares at Tomb Chamber

sumer demands from entertainment suggests there is something more fundamental, more primal, but more difficult to achieve, that is needed.

The Gamestory has a noble pedigree. Since tales of great hunts and hunters were told to awestruck listeners huddled around the protective fire, consumers from cavefolk to moviegoers have been drawn to

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"Got red and blue on my tail. Can you swipe 'em before I go into the screw!... over"



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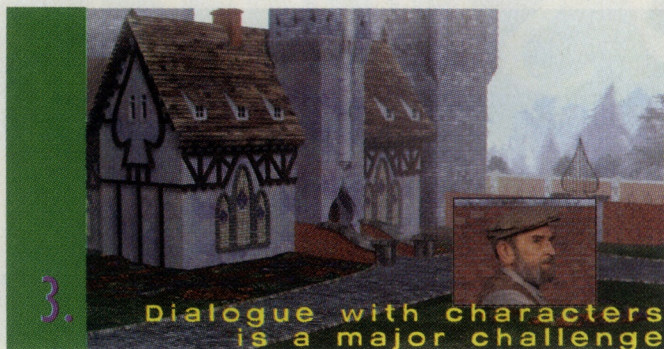
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WLP4



Dialogue with characters is a major challenge

Wolf leers at Ripley

ters and his audience a long-deserved rest.

The old plot of the young heroine in the haunted house is not worth making into a game, if a new reason to tell the story can't be found. And it isn't enough to say, "Well, we added interactivity." The new element should touch us emotionally, intellectually, hopefully in both ways. If the writer can't invest something of him or herself in the material, the Gamestory dies of neglect, or worse: abuse.

The designer must play within a genre's rules. The surest way to camp or boredom lies in taking a very hip, cool, above-it-all attitude to the story moves each genre requires. Attempts to turn a genre on its ear by someone who hasn't a clue why the genre has worked as well as it has across generations and centuries, can only bring disaster. An attempt to do precisely the same thing by someone who knows and respects the genre can result in art.

Let's pretend our baby Gamestory now has a premise with the right elements. Next we need to think about the characters who will move through the story. I like writing games set in real-world universes. This creates all sorts of interesting challenges.

The major characters should be people the gamer will want to spend some time with. The universe of the game should be as populated as the universe it mimics. **Master Lu** had forty-two speaking parts, and I still felt the world was too empty. Part of the reason for unpopulated games is that while it is easy to model realistic-looking environments, it is much harder to approximate the behavior of human beings.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't make the attempt! Without recognizable human characters for the player to interact with, drama is replaced by sensation, and emotion becomes nothing more than an adrenaline rush. Observed human behavior artfully translated is as important in a game as in any other storytelling medium. Basic rules apply.

The characters cannot be clichés. Any more than the story can. I don't believe the tastes of gamers are as degraded as some games require them to be. Gamers are for the most part savvy people, bright and well-rounded. These people might be experiencing some pretty good movies and books when they're not playing games. How many times will they be willing to forgive lapses they'd laugh at in other media?

Dialogue with the characters is a major challenge. There is no algorithmic dialogue system here today, or on the horizon, that can guarantee the level of drama necessary for the Gamestory. For now I'm forced to use a complex web of branching and game-wide, interdependent variables, to create the illusion of a dynamic world where the player appears to dictate the course of events, yet the designer maintains the control necessary to employ the benefits of a more traditional dramatic structure.



Puzzles can illuminate character

Ripley talks to Matteo

All the threads of the conversations, as all the threads of the Gamestory itself, should strive to offer an equally entertaining experience. The player should not be shortchanged for not following a single "golden path" through the game. By the same token the player should be willing to accept a lesser experience, if he is reluctant to go with the flow of the action.

Part of the responsibility of the game designer is to make the main threads of the story attractive to the gamer. Part of the responsibility of the gamer is to go along for the ride. This is not heretical, or some new rule thought up to ensure the lion doesn't devour the lamb every day. Part of the responsibility of the reader is not to put the book down right when Sophie is making her choice. The moviegoer should sit in that seat and squirm rather than heading for the restroom right when John Travolta is teaching Danny De Vito to act.

Finally, a word about puzzles. Puzzles are currently the *raison d'être* of adventure games. This is not as limiting as it might seem on the surface. I like to reward the player for a puzzle well-solved with something cool to look at or listen to, and I can sneak in a little exposition as well. How do we match the dramatic pacing of a film, if the player gets bogged down in a puzzle, or would rather stare at the pretty pictures? Puzzles can actually help pacing, and they're a wonderful device to reveal character.

As mentioned above, during the course of playing, the gamer enters into a relationship with the designer. As s/he becomes more comfortable with the parameters the designer has chosen to work within, s/he comes to feel the underlying rhythm, the heartbeat of the game. The designer can exploit that. By placing puzzles near the climax that are actually easier than in the body of the game, the gamer will feel the pace of the game picking up. And if a puzzle relies on how a character (either the protagonist or an NPC) views the world, we can use the puzzle to deepen our understanding of the character.

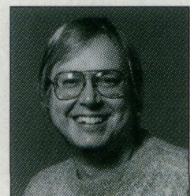
The Gamestory is still a yearling, wobbling about on ungainly legs. It will require a lot of nurturing before it will realize its full potential. But one day it will be as powerful a source of entertainment and human enrichment as the best novel, play or film. ♦



Reward the player for a puzzle well-solved

The explosion

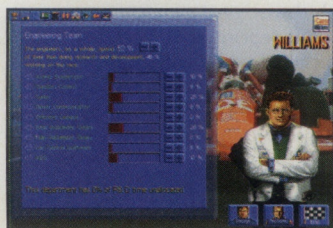
Lee Sheldon is the senior writer/designer at Sanctuary Woods. He has recently completed his first adventure game, *The Riddle of Master Lu*, and in a past life worked in TV. We'd like to thank him for his willingness to offer us the above contribution in the midst of an extremely hectic schedule.





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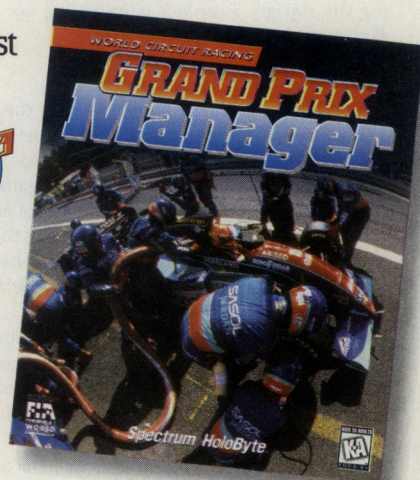


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The decline and fall of the realism empire



Classic hex-based gaming: the V for Victory Commemorative Collection

To begin, let me state that I'm all for attracting fresh blood to the wargaming market. In the not-so-distant past, most wargames were created specifically for the so-called grognard, and were very intimidating for newbies. SSI changed all that with **Panzer General**. Suddenly there was a wargame(ish) program that your average gamer could get into.

Since then SSI, as well as other companies, have continued to focus on this same market. SSI is working on **Allied General** and **Fantasy General**. And of course there is **Panzer General II**, which will no doubt launch its own host of spin-offs. SSI also managed to **Panzer Generalize** the latest Grigsby game, **Steel Panthers**. **TalonSoft** jumped onto the bandwagon with the **Battleground** series. **Battleground: Ardennes** was just a tad more complex than **Panzer General**. Still, the emphasis was on fun, with only as much historical authenticity as would fit without complicating the design. **TalonSoft** is following up **Ardennes** with **Battleground: Gettysburg** and **Battleground: Waterloo**, with more to come.

So what's my point? Well, it seems the pendulum has swung radically the other way. Now, it seems we're getting virtually no detailed and historically authentic wargames (by the way, I don't mean to pick on SSI and **TalonSoft**. It's just that they're currently the most visible producers of wargames). The exceptions come from a few small publishers such as **Arsenal Publications** and **HPS Simulations**; publishers with limited distribution and visibility. But overall, most companies are turning towards the "safe" level of complexity invented in **Panzer General**. **D-Day: America Invades** was a notable exception, but with publisher **Avalon Hill** and developer **Atomic Games** parting ways, there isn't much hope for any more games in the series (at least not in the foreseeable future).



The Grandest Fleet from QQP's War at Sea collection

If we're going to nurture a new generation of fledgling wargamers, we need somewhere for them to go after they've exhausted the complexity levels of the **General** and **Battleground** series. Somewhere there must be a middle ground between 100% hardcore and 100% beer and pretzels. C'mon, developers. Give us some variety! Newcomers to the hobby will be "outgrowing" the simpler games and looking for something with a bit more depth. *Someone* will acknowledge this market and make a tidy profit...

Now here's something bound to cause some of you to throw down the mag in disgust. I'd like to point out the potential in the "next generation" gaming systems. In recent weeks, mouse peripherals have been released for both 3DO and the **Sony Playstation**, with one for the **Sega Saturn** on the way. This tears down the largest obstacle to doing strategy and wargames on these platforms; the joypads are just too clumsy for long gaming sessions.

SSI has produced **Panzer General** for the 3DO, and a version for the **Playstation** is on its way. **MicroProse** has just ported **X-Com** to the **Sony Playstation** (with **Gunship 2000** in the works, for you sim fans). **Koei**, of course, has always supported the consoles. Currently their **Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV** is out on the **Saturn**.

As someone who has sat back on his couch, his feet up on the coffee table, playing **X-Com** on a 27" TV with the full audio trimmings, I can tell you it's a darned pleasant experience. Not sure I'm ready to advise you to buy one of these "toasters" (as one reader called them) yet, but it's getting close to that point. Once they iron the bugs out (**MicroProse** totally dropped the ball on the **Playstation X-Com** manual. It is woefully incomplete, something which may be due to the way **Playstation** games have to be packaged) I suspect strategy and light wargames could generate a very nice audience for



SSI's Panzer General, 3DO style

themselves on the newer consoles. No setup hassles, no bi-annual upgrades. Just lots of great gaming.

A great shovelware package just landed on my desk. **Intracorp** has released the **V for Victory Commemorative Collection**. It contains all four **V for Victory** games (**Utah Beach**, **Gold-Juno-Sword**, **Market Garden** and **Velikiye Luki**) updated to version 4.01 of the game engine. This is an exceptional value, and a great way to complete your collection. 'Sides, it'll give you some hardcore wargaming action while you wait for SSI and **TalonSoft** to respond to my earlier diatribe. Or until **Intracorp/360** releases **V for Victory II: War in the Pacific**, which they are hard at work at (there is still hope for the hardcore!).

Lastly, another shovelware collection. **QQP** has bundled **The Lost Admiral**, **The Grandest Fleet** and **World War II—Battles of the South Pacific** onto a CD, and called it the **War at Sea Collection**. This collection includes all the documentation included with the original games—a nice change from the reprinted or on-disk documentation included with many software collections. I have a particular fondness for **The Grandest Fleet**, and it makes me all warm and fuzzy knowing I have it safely on a CD-ROM.

There's a new web page devoted to email wargaming. I promised the webmaster I'd mention it, so here ya go. It's at www.kiss.del/wargamer. The site maintains a list of potential email opponents for several games, most notably **Panzer General** and **Steel Panthers**, with more scheduled for the future. If you're looking for an opponent, this is an excellent place to start. Check it out.

Well, that wraps it up for this month. Until next time, may your battles all be waged in silicon! ♦

Peter Smith

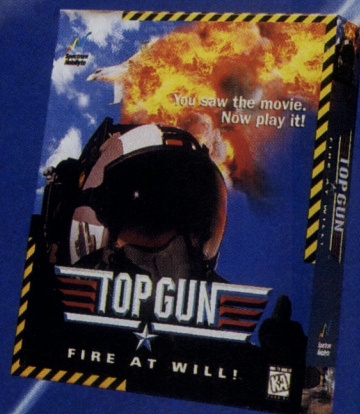
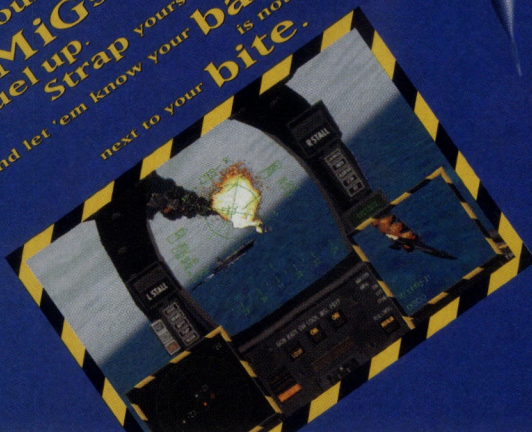
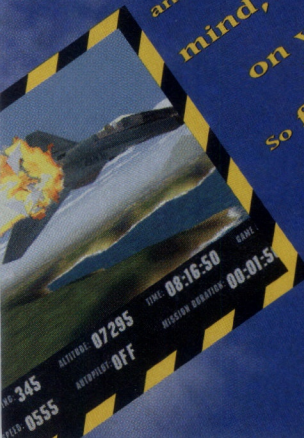
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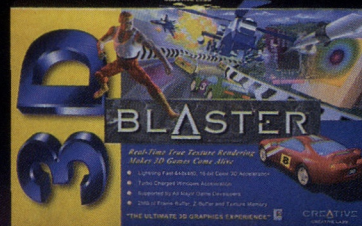
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A Higher Form of Maneuver - Tactics Writ Large

.....
Greetings wafer warriors!

Now that we have spent our time down in the trenches, or at least the tank turrets of some games, we are ready to consider a higher form of maneuver. These maneuvers have as much applicability at the lower levels of tactics as at the higher, because any force can take part in these type of operations. However, at lower levels, many attacks, regardless of whether they are a part of a penetration or an envelopment, have the appearance of a frontal attack. This is because it is very easy for small forces, say up to a battalion, to reorient rapidly to face an attack from an unexpected direction. Larger units have more inertia. It is this inertia which we attempt to exploit in order to gain an advantage over the enemy and defeat him rapidly.

The most elementary attack is the *frontal attack*. In this attack, the attacker directs his maneuver straight ahead and attempts to overwhelm the defender with direct pressure. This is what happened in World War I. The two sides quickly ran out of room to try flanks and had to take part in bloody and useless attacks to break the enemy front. As might be expected, the frontal attack is a fundamental part of warfare, and is shown in **Figure 1**. Here, all three brigades are merely attacking straight ahead in order to destroy the enemy.

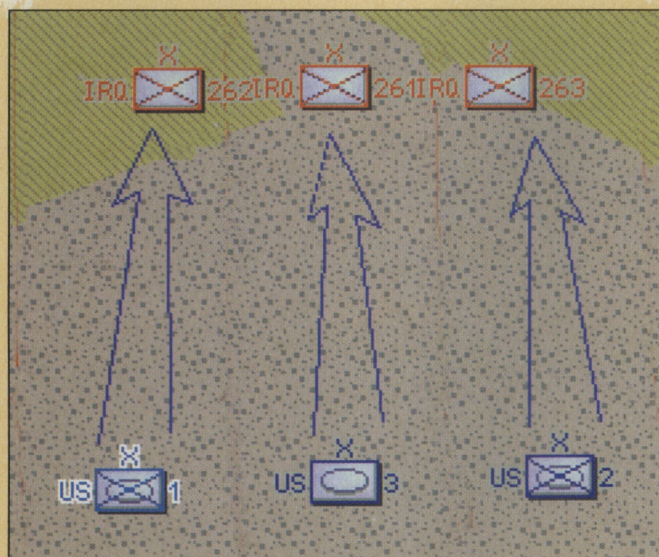


Figure 1: Hi diddle-diddle, straight up the middle!

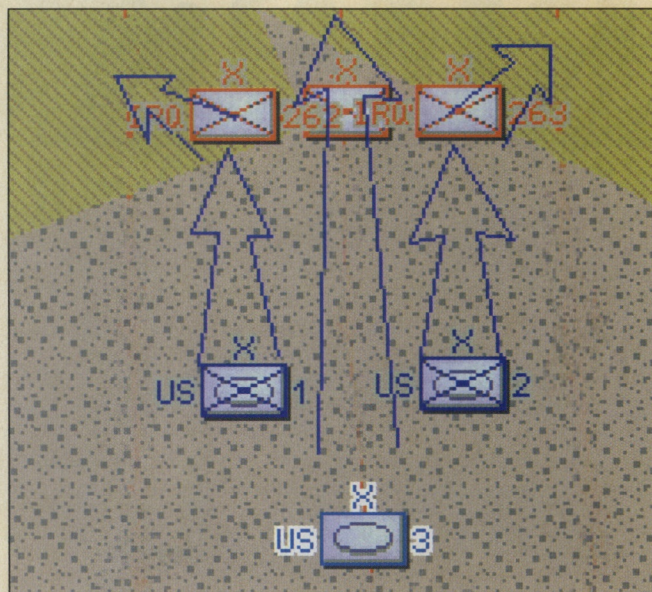


Figure 2: The penetration

Now, you might say this is pretty stupid. Why would we attack into the teeth of the enemy defense? Well, we might not – as was the case in World War I – have any choice about it. Or, we might be attempting to create a weak point in order to conduct another type of maneuver. This leads us to the *penetration attack*, a variation of the frontal attack. In its most basic form, the attacker puts two units up and has a sizable reserve in order to exploit his success. This reserve will, when committed, go deep and destroy the enemy reserve. An effective effort here opens the way for follow-on forces to achieve a decisive success. World War I Generals tried this approach. Unfortunately, they were handicapped by the fact that they could not move their artillery forward rapidly, and horse cavalry was incapable, in most cases, of moving on the battlefield. Poor communications, rigid planning, and the mechanical unreliability of the tank also conspired against them. However, by the time of the Persian Gulf War techniques were more sophisticated, and penetration attacks thus had substantially greater success.

In **Figure 2**, we are conducting a penetration. The 1st and 2nd Brigades (at the bottom) are conducting frontal attacks in order to push the enemy brigades out of the way. The 3rd Brigade (in reserve) will, after a gap is opened, attack through the lead brigades to objectives in the enemy rear. The objective could be terrain, but is frequently the enemy artillery or local reserve. The lead brigades will widen the gap in the line and hold the shoulders of the penetration against enemy counterattacks. This two up and one back is pretty basic in units all the way down to rifle platoons. Incidentally, never commit your reserve in an attempt to rescue failure, but only to reinforce success.

Once you have ruptured the enemy line, then commit the Corps Reserve through the penetration and destroy the enemy tactical reserve. Once the penetration is successful, the reserve unit may either continue the attack deeper, or conduct an envelopment. Remember from our previous lessons that the attacking unit attempts to isolate and destroy an enemy force anywhere from one third to one-sixth its own size. Remember to use your supporting

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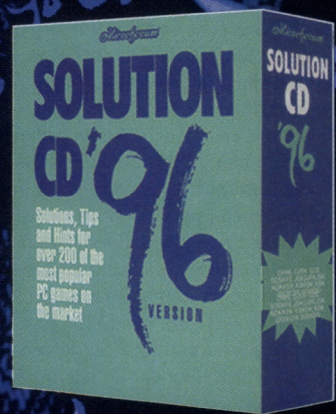
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Figure 3: In my tank, around the flank

arms, artillery, air support, air defense artillery, and electronic combat to isolate and suppress the attacked units and prevent the enemy from reacting to the attack.

The way to defeat a penetration is to attack the shoulders and close the penetration at the base. Then the spearhead is isolated and other units can destroy it at leisure.

There are two ways to envelop an enemy. One is to find an open flank and go around. That is what Schwarzkopf did with the XVIII Airborne Corps during the Gulf War. He merely extended the flank far enough out (while preventing the Iraqis from finding out about it) to enable them to go around with little resistance. The other method is to attack through or create a weak point and envelop from the newly created flank. The VII Corps did both by having the 1st and 3rd US Armored Divisions conduct an envelopment around the Iraqi line while the 1st UK Armored Division attacked through the US 1st Infantry Division's penetration. The very deep envelopment is called a *turning movement*. Envelopments may either be *single wing* or *double wing*. The *double wing envelopment* was, of course, first performed by Hannibal as he cut the Roman legions to pieces at Cannae, creating a standard few generals have been able to duplicate. **Figure 3** shows the XVIII Corps turning movement and the VII Corps close envelopment. **Figure 4** shows a double envelopment by two divisions, while the third (in the center) fixes the enemy with a (you guessed it!) frontal attack.

Once the enemy breaks and is running, we get to exploit and pursue him. In this situation, the enemy has only limited ability to resist us. Accordingly, we must keep up the pressure on him to prevent him from reorganizing sufficiently to make a stand anywhere. Pursuing units destroy any military unit they encounter, particularly easy pickings like command posts, transportation, maintenance, and other relatively defenseless units. We divide the force into two parts: a direct pressure force (the two mechanized infantry brigades) which hounds the enemy like a pack of dogs after an exhausted fox, and an encircling force. In this case, I am using two encircling forces. An armor brigade is conducting

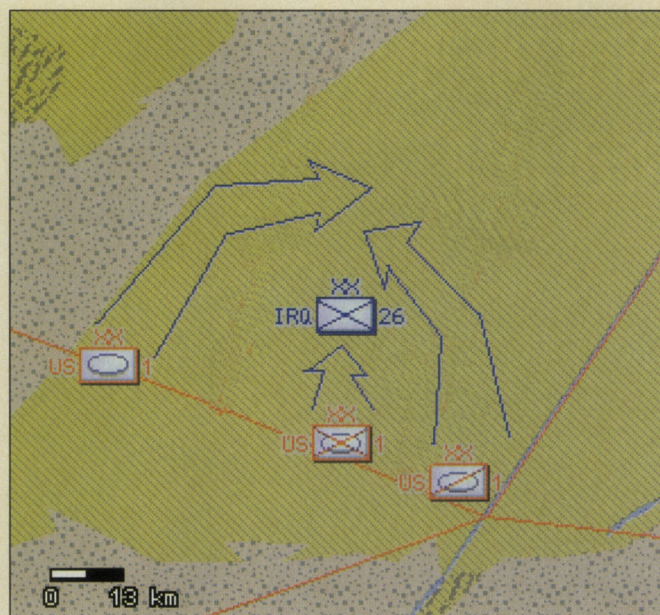


Figure 4: We're going for a Cannae!

a close envelopment of the enemy while my aviation brigade goes deep to destroy command and control elements, supporting units, and prevent the enemy from reorganizing a defensive line. (**Figure 5**)

These techniques, while illustrated with **Patriot** here, work in any game, like **Empire**, **The Perfect War** series, or any other game that is your favorite. Techniques for creating penetrations using games like **Tanks!** were covered previously.

Next, we will look at deceit and its role on the battlefield. Till then, good shooting! ♦

Mike Robel

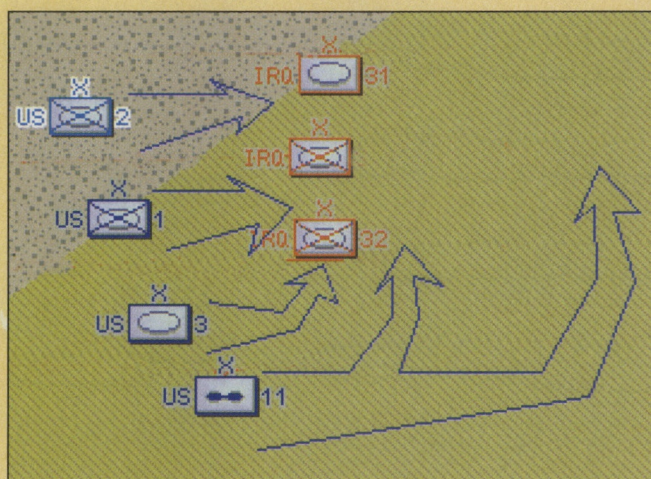


Figure 5: Find the rascals, then don't let go

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Capitalism

Let me set the tone of this review by telling you this: it's now 4:30 am and I just tore myself away from *Interactive Magic's Capitalism* (designed by *Enlight Software*). I'll pay for this tomorrow, but I just couldn't stop playing.

Capitalism is a retail business simulation. It has all the things you'd expect: stock markets, R&D, inventory problems, advertising, employee training. The amazing part is, it has all these features (and more), and is still downright fun to play. It accomplishes this by making all information accessible, using a consistent interface, and having on-line help. What's more, you can play the game at various levels of difficulty. Lower levels require less attention to detail, and as such make the game a bit easier to play.

You can play **Capitalism** in two ways: either as a free form game started from scratch (in which case your overall goal is ostensibly to dominate every industry, but really your goal will be to see how rich you can become), or you can accept the challenge of one of seventeen preset scenarios. Each way of playing has its charms. The nice thing about the freeform game is that you can poke along at your leisure. It's fairly easy to make a little money in this game, but as a rule the scenarios force you to go for the really big bucks in order to win, which is much harder. On the other hand, the preset scenarios are identical each time you play them. This means you can learn from your losses, and believe me, you'll lose often until you get the hang of the game.

In order to help you explore your capitalistic inner self, the game includes an extensive tutorial system (sample scenarios covering all major facets of the game), a generally well written and indexed manual, and on-line help for most common questions. The one part of the manual that left me feeling a bit lost was the chapter on manipulating the stock market. *I-Magic* might want to polish that section up a bit (or more accurately, dumb it down for those of us with no real-world business acumen).

General gameplay starts with you looking for a niche that no one has exploited yet. Next you obtain a supply of the product in that niche and go about selling it. Early on, you'll generally be importing goods to sell or sticking to relatively simple products like food. As your empire (and bank balance) grows, you can start collecting raw materials and pounding them into bright shiny products to catch the consumer's eye.

Everything you do — buying, building, selling, researching, etc. — takes place in a firm. There are various different kinds of firms, but all have a 3x3 grid layout. You'll buy units and place them in this grid, then link them together. Thus, at its simplest, a retail outlet will have a purchasing unit and a sales unit,



Each firm is laid out in a 3x3 grid (bottom right). This particular firm is a factory that produces televisions and VCRs

linked together. If you find yourself often using the same layout over and over, you can save that layout in a library and load it whenever you build an appropriate firm.

The trickiest part of selling is determining the right price. Every product has three factors that influence how desirable the product is to consumers: price, quality, and brand awareness. Part of your job will be to balance these three factors in order to sell the maximum number of units at a premium profit. You can change prices at your whim, but quality and brand awareness increase only through long term investments in manufacturing techniques and advertising, respectively.

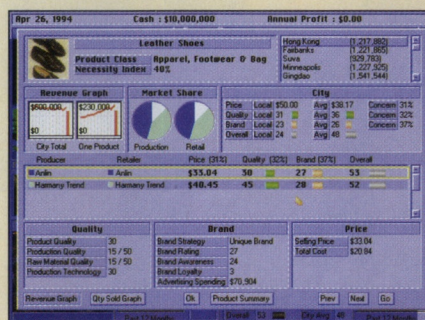
In addition to building, buying and selling products, you can opt to dabble in the stock market. In fact, it is possible to never build a firm, and to succeed solely as a market speculator (or so I'm told — I haven't developed a proper nose for stock market investing yet). If you manage to obtain over 50% of another corporation's stock, you perform a hostile take over. If

you get 75% of it, you can force a merger.

As your empire builds, and you grow tired of worrying about whether your competitors are undercutting you in that wool socks price war, you can hire a company president to take care of the little details. Each potential president has his or her own personality and reaction to you. A hostile president is apt to be hammering you for a raise every time you turn around, for instance. *Enlight Software* has done an excellent job of offloading drudgery from the player, while at the same time adding yet another level of decision making to the game design.

Capitalism is far and away the best (I'm no CPA so I won't presume to pass judgment on the game's realism, other than to say it feels authentic) business simulation I've had the pleasure to play. The bottom line? **Capitalism** is an excellent game that shouldn't be missed by anyone with the slightest interest in the subject matter. ♦

Peter Smith



The Product Detail report provides you with just about everything you need to know about the goods you're dealing with



The Manufacturer's Guide can search for the components needed to make an item, or conversely, can give suggestions as to what you to build with raw materials on hand

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Conqueror A.D. 1086

Long-time computer gamers might remember **Defender of the Crown**, from Cinemaware. It came out for the Atari ST and Amiga, back in the days before IBM claimed the phrase "personal computer" for itself. **Defender of the Crown** put you in the armor of a knight; through various sub-games, you'd try to build up personal wealth and power.

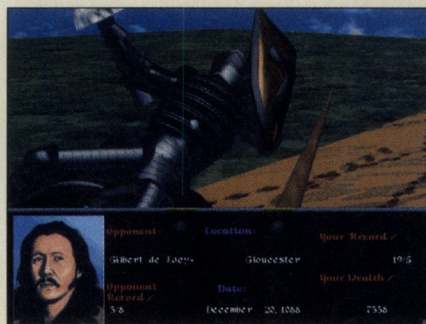
Sierra has decided to explore the same territory with **Conqueror A.D. 1086**. The game was developed by *Software Sorcery*, and was originally scheduled to be released by *Time Warner Interactive*. With a family tree like this one, it's no surprise that **Conqueror** is a beautiful game. You'll see one lavish screen after another as you live the life of a young knight, intent on making a name for himself.

Unfortunately, the disrupted development pipeline shows itself in some less positive ways. The manual is atrocious, the game crashes more than any finished product should, and in general gameplay is often disjointed and nonsensical. For instance, I got myself into a brawl at an inn and ended up mortally skewered on some fellow's dagger. Imagine my surprise when I then jumped up from the battle and strode out of the inn to live a long and prosperous second life!

Your goal in **Conqueror** is to "roll up" a knight and set out either to become the King's Champion by slaying a dragon, or to usurp the throne by leading your troops against the king. Gameplay is divided into two major modes. The first is a fief management game that has you running your village to maximize growth and profit. By spending gold and assigning peasants, you can clear land to grow crops or build housing. The strategy game is where you build and staff your castle as well.

The problem with this section of **Conqueror** is a lack of information and purpose. The manual gives no information on interrelationships between the various fief embellishments. For instance, how many peasants will a house shelter? What benefit do roads give? How many peasants will a field of beans feed? None of these questions are answered. As well, having a bigger castle seems to have no effect on defense, so why bother with the expense of building one?

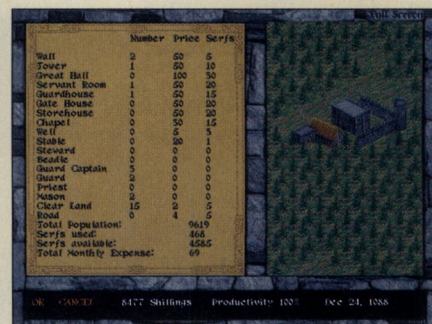
The second part of the game has you wandering the countryside, conquering your neighbors (either at the king's bidding or for your own purposes) or attending tournaments to win fame and the favor of the ladies of the court. This part of the game further breaks down into several mini-games: the joust, the melee, and the battle. The joust is very like the one in the old **Defender of**



The jousting sub-game is much more playable than the one in *Defender of the Crown*



This is the travel map, where you'll roam across the land



Castle-building is a nifty idea, but has no real effect in the game



The ladies of the court know lots of information ... and will share it with their beau

the **Crown** for those of you who remember that game. Your horse carries you along and you need only strike your opponent squarely with your lance in order to win. The melee is a rudimentary **DOOM** clone that has you hacking down opponents with the help of your men. Finally, the battles are small real-time wargames, with each figure representing 100 men. Control in the battle is extremely frustrating; generally, the bigger army will carry the day, since coordinating tactics is nearly impossible.

Conqueror A.D. 1086 could have been a fine game with a bit more polish and more thought put into the storyline. The pieces just don't mesh. If you're halfway across England and your home castle is attacked, you can still defend it. When two armies clash, both are sometimes eliminated from the map (I'm still not entirely sure if this is a bug or a feature). This means you can take a castle easily, by sending several small token armies in to get rid of the defenders (whether your armies win or lose), then leading a final army in to attack the now defenseless castle.

More subtly, if you choose to pursue the dragon slaying quest, you'll have to court the various ladies at the tournaments. All well and good, but you basically have to pledge yourself to each one in turn until she falls in love with you and grants you an item you need. After that you must turn your back on her and proceed to the next lady and the

next item. Not a very chivalrous way for the King's Champion to behave, is it?

When all is said and done, **Conqueror A.D. 1086** fails to hold together, and that's a shame. Much work went into providing excellent atmosphere. The intro is wonderful, and had me eager to play. The sub-games were fun, though not terribly challenging. Fief management seems to have little bearing on the game, though, and castle building is a complete waste of time. And what joy can come from breaking a fair maiden's heart? If Sierra can create an **Outpost 2**, maybe they'll also do us the favor of a **Conqueror 2**. The idea behind the game is wonderful, and I for one would be eager to see it work. ♦

Peter Smith

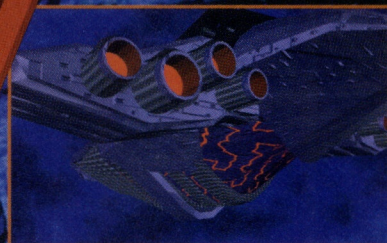
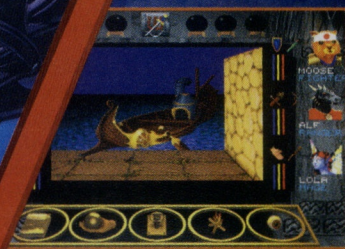


Sorry, this isn't game play (I wish!) **Conqueror** is nothing if not pretty

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Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness



Once again, rank comes with victory

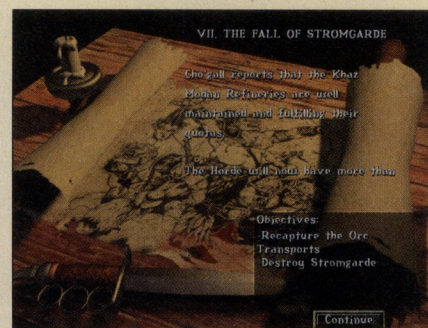
Since you read *Strategy Plus* regularly, you are not only intelligent, attractive and successful, you know what to expect from **Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** from *Blizzard Entertainment*. For months now, we've been telling you it's going to be just like **Warcraft**, only more so: more units, resources, buildings, pixels (it's SVGA), terrain types, players (up to eight on a LAN) and theatres of war (you now have land, sea, and air units).

Now get this: that doesn't even begin to convey how good this game actually is. The amount of polish *Blizzard* has applied just in the two months since their press beta is amazing. **Warcraft** was a well-rounded game, but **Warcraft II** feels much more polished. I always took umbrage at having to tell a unit what to do when, in many cases, it should be obvious: if you tell a peon to go to a gold mine, you want him to harvest gold. **Warcraft II** lets you right-click to quickly dispatch your units. Click on clear ground and you move there. Click on an enemy unit

and you will attack him. If you've been playing a lot of **Command & Conquer** lately (and, really, what are the odds?), you'll welcome this feature.

One is no more. There are now only three resources, but they are well-balanced and as easy to manage as in the original. Also, you no longer have to "ping" for oil — it appears as a dark patch in the water. One considerable improvement is that you don't have to muck around with resource management as much as you used to. Once you have three or so peons, each harvesting gold and lumber and a couple of oil tankers, you can pretty much build whatever units you want.

Your units are also more intelligent, which should make countless gamers very happy. And although you can select nine of them at once now (up from four), their additional smarts actually makes them harder to control. Units are more assertive about advancing and engaging the enemy. So let's say you have a rank of grunts in front of a rank of Troll axethrowers. Some Elvish archers start



The mission briefings will outline your objectives

shooting the grunts, so they advance to attack the archers. Since the axethrowers don't quite see the archers, and they aren't being attacked directly, they won't take a step forward to shoot the archers back. (You can tell a unit to stand its ground, or patrol between two points, making it easier to get them to do exactly what you want them to.) In other words, units function very intelligently by themselves, but they don't coordinate their efforts — that's your job. It makes this a much better game than the original. **Warcraft** units didn't have enough smarts; this time, they got it exactly right.

There are a couple of things about **Warcraft II** I didn't like. In **Warcraft**, the smaller overhead map showed enemy units in red, making them easy to spot. In **Warcraft II**, they appear in their clan color. Since opponents change from scenario to scenario, so do the colors of enemy units — and some enemies may be the same color as previous allies. Certain colors also disappear into the background, making it difficult to spot enemy sneak attacks. If I'm playing on the fastest speed, I'll often lose a sentry before he can yell "We're under attack." Also, I would like fog of war better if terrain affected line of sight for ground units, but this is pretty nit-picky. The fact is, **Warcraft II** has gone far beyond its predecessor. It looks better and gives you more toys to play with. Best of all, the new features make the game play an order of magnitude better — and isn't that the point of a sequel? ♦

Tim Keating



Town assaults will be familiar to Warcraft veterans

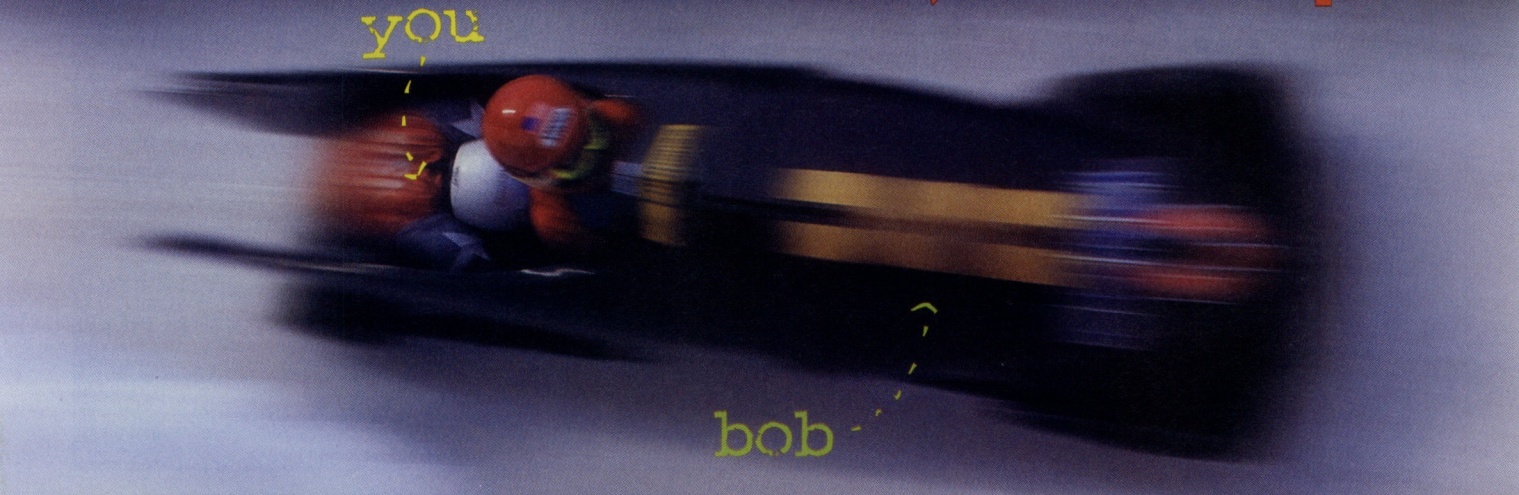


This time out, you'll fight in various climates



You're no longer hampered by only being able to select four units — now you can grab up to nine

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MAX G-FORCE: 4G
4G OVER THREE SECONDS



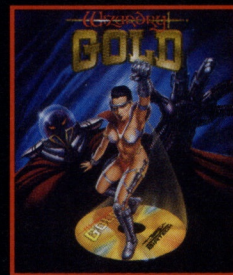
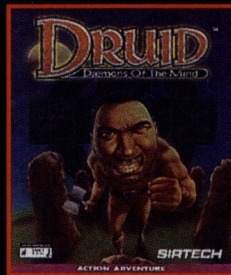
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Panthers in the Shadows

Exploring the possibilities of HPS's ultra-detailed new wargame

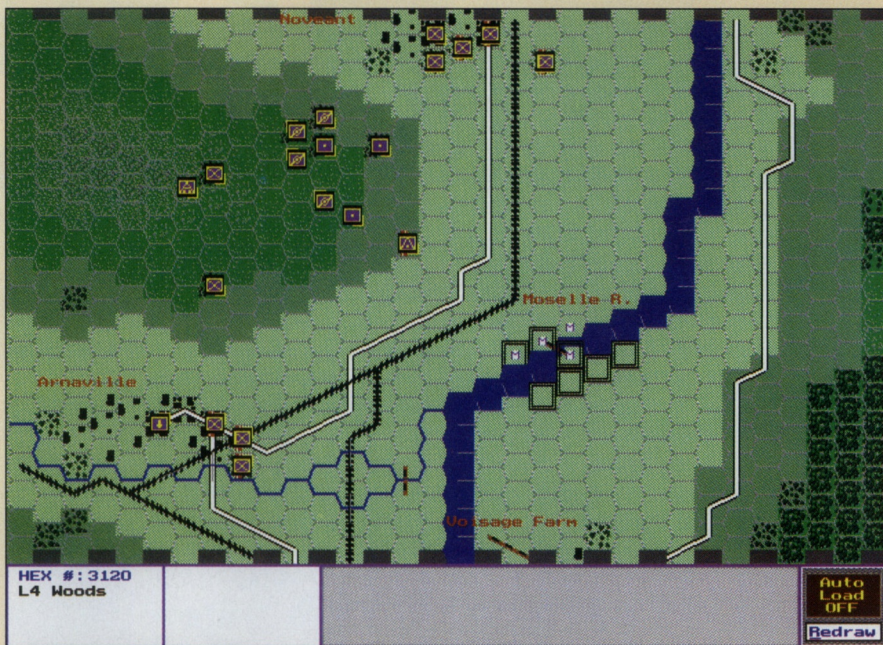
Serious wargamers know that *HPS Simulations*, aka Scott Hamilton, provides some of the best hard core tactical simulations available on the PC. *HPS* has recently added **Panthers in the Shadows** to its repertoire, giving WWII fans a chance to pit the western allies against the German panzers.

Getting the most out of this complex simulation can take a bit of work, however. Like its predecessor **Tigers on the Prowl**, **Panthers** is not for the faint of heart. With that in mind, perhaps a brief exploration of what **Panthers** has to offer might help tame this feral feline.

Panthers continues the *HPS* tradition of detail and accuracy debuted in **Tigers**. Many of the differences between the two games arise from the additional choices **Panthers** provides gamers. Where **Tigers** abstracted virtually all engineering functions, for example, **Panthers** allows you to have your sappers clear minefields and obstacles during the game, and even makes it possible to wire bridges for demolition and send them up in a blast of concrete, smoke, and shattered timetables. And because what goes up must come down, in **Panthers** you can float to earth under a silken parachute canopy, or surrender to gravity in a wooden box with wings. Yes, airborne landings are a reality in **Panthers**, and make for some wild scenario building opportunities. You don't know what frustration is until you've tried to gather your scattered battalion during a windy drop, with enemy machine guns shooting at your troops in the air and enemy mortars pounding your disorganized forces on the ground.

Though none of the included scenarios allows for parachute drops, you can easily create scenarios which offer death from above. Take the manual's advice, though, and set the wind to five mph or less unless you want to simulate a disaster like the 82nd's drop on Sicily...

The United States Army makes its debut in **Panthers**, and wherever the Americans went in WWII, they had to get there by invasion. One of the new features of **Panthers** is amphibious assaults. The Americans alone have nearly twenty types of amphibious vehicles and landing craft, supported by off-map naval gunfire support and air strikes, including carpet bombing. With a little imagination, and the map editor, you can create battles from virtually any WWII landing west of the Black Sea. The experience of watching your troops plow towards a hostile shore in their landing craft, while mortar shells burst and machine gun bullets fly around them, is one of the high points of the game. Throw in a mined and barricaded beach, enemy artillery in casemates, and pill boxes blocking the exits from



The Netherlands have a nasty surprise waiting for any Germans trying to cross the river...

the beach, and you've got the recipe for a real barn burner. Designing and playing amphibious assaults can be tricky, however. Your landing craft move slowly, and make great targets. Be sure to allow plenty of game time for your forces to hit the beach, much less make their way off and onto the objectives.

While **Tigers** did a great job of simulating set-piece battles, **Panthers** allows the use of reinforcements, and thus is better at presenting meeting engagements and other battles that develop over time. You can set the map edge hex and turn of arrival for each reinforcing unit, or have jump- and glider-capable units arrive at drop zones you select. Combine the two in designing a scenario and you can have wild and woolly battles, where reinforcing enemy columns overrun your drop zones, just as your hapless paratroopers are jumping into the fray. Shades of Arnhem, indeed. The addition of reinforcements to the game makes possible some very sophisticated scenarios, where an outnumbered force must hold on desperately until help arrives, and the attacker has to make hay while the sun shines. It is even possible to create scenarios where neither side has units on the map at start, setting up some truly unpredictable meeting engagements. Reconnaissance is more important in **Panthers** than in most tactical games, and good players will use their recon units carefully. If possible, assign recon units to direct support (DS; "J" company) to take advantage of the zero command delay for DS units.

If you are making a set-piece attack in **Panthers**, chances are you'll come face to face with some additional innovations: pill-boxes, casemates, and obstacles. In addition to the tried and true minefields and wire entanglements of **Tigers**, **Panthers** adds many more fieldworks to complicate the attacker's job. Not to fear, though; now you can make those engineer units earn their pay by clearing such impediments to rapid conquest. By ordering engineers into minefields, or on to obstacles, you can begin clearing a path for your troops. Specialty vehicles, like mine clearing and 'dozer tanks, make the job somewhat easier, as do hedgerow-busting Sherman "plows." Keep in mind, however, that obstacle clearance is slow work, and your sappers will be very exposed while working. Still, the addition of realistic engineering options makes possible some very interesting scenarios.

With all those new capabilities, it is good that **Panthers** players get the advantage of a revamped interface, featuring a new staff officer system. Based loosely on WWII operational practice, the staff officer screens display information about your own and your opponent's forces. You can view your order of battle, check on your supply or command and control situation, and order air and artillery attacks with the help of your staff. Assuming you can see any of the bad guys, you can ask your intelligence people to estimate enemy intentions, and to give you a

II-a, I, 2/PERSONNEL OFFICER: PICK A UNIT TO 'GOTO' OR AN OPTION. F1/END TO EXIT

TF					IIa OPTIONS														
1st Bn					2nd Bn					3rd Bn					HIGHLIGHT RED UNITS ON MAP CHANGE A UNIT'S WEAPON CHANGE A UNIT'S QUANTITY LAST TURN STATS/SUMMARY DONE (F1/END)				
HQ's	4/4 25/1 APC	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	7/7 Infant PERS														

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
A Co	2/2 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Hilb1 AA									
B Co	2/2 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK										
C Co	2/2 Pz UB TANK	4/4 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	4/4 Sskfz AA									
D Co	2/2 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK										
E Co	2/2 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK										
F Co	1/1 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK	3/3 Pz UB TANK										
G Co	6/6 Infant PERS	3/3 3 Ton CARGO	36/36 Infant PERS	3/3 3 Ton CARGO	38/38 Infant PERS	5/5 3 Ton CARGO	36/36 Infant PERS	3/3 3 Ton CARGO	4/4 Heavy PERS	2/2 B1. Mor MORTA				
H Co	6/6 Infant PERS	4/4 3 Ton CARGO	3/3 120 Ho MORTA	3/3 3 Ton CARGO	20/20 AA	3/3 3 Ton CARGO	4/4 75mm A							
I Co														
D/S	2/2 Sskfz REC'D	3/3 Sskfz REC'D	3/3 250/9 REC'D	3/3 150 Ho ARTY	3/3 150 Ho ARTY	5/5 25/1 APC	32/32 Chbt E							

Legend:

Not Used

Off-map

Broken/On-map

Broken/Off-map

Blue: 76-100% Strength

Blue: 51-75% Strength

Red: Below 50% Strength

Now, THAT'S a nice formation...

breakdown of where the opposing force's center of effort lies. The staff screens are particularly valuable in larger battles, and are indispensable for keeping track of your fire support assets in particular. Make a habit of checking out your own status and that of your opponent every turn, and you can avoid some nasty surprises.

A very pleasant surprise awaits enterprising scenario designers. You can create your

craft detailed simulations of specific battles that catch your fancy. In fact, the most fun you can have with **Panthers** comes in making these custom battles, either for solitaire or email play. To make an enjoyable game, it only takes a little research, a little patience, and a lot of imagination.

To begin with, don't try to include everything in one battle. An amphibious assault, supported by an air drop, against a fortified

own scenarios with a minimum of fuss. By using the <shift+S> command after setting up the first of your two forces in a from-scratch battle, you can save the game as a scenario instead of a save game file. This means when you load it again, you can set either side to computer or human control, and thus play either side. By carefully considering your design, you can now create impregnable defenses and try your hand at smashing them, or

enemy behind a wall of forts backed up by hordes of panzers might sound great, but such a scenario will quickly degenerate into a slow, confused mess. Pick a particular theme for your battle. Good choices might be a meeting engagement between reconnaissance elements of two armies, or a paratroop on an airfield, or an opposed river crossing against light opposition. Or, you can simulate specific events, from specific battles; any engagement that involved a battalion or two per side makes a good choice, if its interesting. If you are designing a game for solitaire play, having the computer handle a defense you set up works better than making the computer attack you. Unless you like really long, slow, games, don't plan a big battle with nothing but infantry on both sides; use small maps and few units for foot slogging action.

Panthers is a complex, detailed game that rewards the effort you expend on playing it. Take the time to explore its nuances, though, and you'll find the big feline is really a pussycat in disguise. And besides, where else can you pit French horse cavalry against Italian bicycle troops, or Belgian armored cars against German ski patrols? After all, gamers do not live by T-34s and Panthers alone.... and aren't you just a little bit curious about Dutch horse drawn artillery? ♦

Robert Riley Mayer

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Reader Service No. 103



[illegible]

Home court floor graphics, team colors and fans-in-the-stands signage give you the whole flavor of the NCAA college hoops experience.



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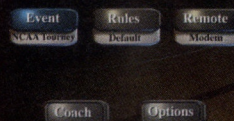
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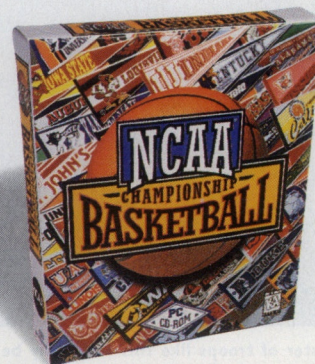
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Exhibition
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Conference Tourney
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Load Tourney

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Command & Conquer: small unit tactics

Essential tactical elements

COMMAND & CONQUER offers a real-time game of near-future military missions. The scenarios are a layered learning experience, with each adding a separate nuance to the gaming experience. While it is immensely challenging and fun, its simulation capabilities may be summed up as "C&C tactics is to military tactics as military music is to music." Common sense is more important than military theory. There are four essential lessons of tactical success —

(1) The most important tactical lesson of **C&C** is reflective of naval warfare and not ground combat — e.g., overload the defenses. Ground combat historically rewards suppressive fires; as long as one is putting enough firepower near the enemy, then the enemy is presumably hunkering down and his combat effectiveness is diminished.

However, **C&C** rewards the naval aspect of concentration of force on a portion of the enemy in order to defeat him in detail (cf. Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*, pp. 37-39). The Prime Directive of **C&C** tactical resolution is therefore to engage the most serious enemy threat and mass fires upon it until it is destroyed; attempting to engage a number of enemy units will merely dissipate one's firepower and rapidly lose the mission.

(2) Although it is often repeated, it is just as often ignored — RTFM (Read the Full Manual). **C&C** possesses an intuitive interface, and it is all too easy for a veteran player to jump into the midst of the game. This may be characterized as a strategic error; the README.TXT file has a number of “keyboard shortcuts and special features” which are mentioned nowhere else. They are easy to learn and apply, and are essential for victory maximization; they include guard mode



A cluster of troops like this can easily be turned into roadkill by one pass of a tank or harvester. A flame attack can also take them all out at once...



Medium tanks may not be fast, but they're sturdy enough to survive scattered enemy contact while exploring the map. Also, note that the scanner (top right) is toggled to view the entire map (accomplished by clicking the "Map" button below it). This view isn't pretty, but it should be used at all times to avoid enemy surprises

(selecting an area-specific roving patrol), scatter (allowing a group to disperse and offer a less viable target), stop (interrupt a unit before it moves into harm's way unnecessarily), bookmark (create up to four designated sites which may be "teleported" to as needed), team creation (direct selected units into a cohesive formation which may be addressed by a single keystroke) and several other "nice-to-haves."

(3) Read and understand the victory conditions! Destruction of the enemy force is not always the enemy's center of gravity. What good does it do to cause massive enemy casualties, but fail to accomplish the victory objectives? Many scenarios are hit-and-run missions, and involve securing an item or area; enemy casualties have little or



...but selecting them all and hitting the Scatter key (X) will cause them to disperse. You still might lose two at a time, but two is better than five or six!

no bearing on success. Generally, if one begins a scenario without an MCY (movable construction yard) and the mission does not involve resurrecting or stealing a construction base, then the mission is of the raid variety. No reinforcements are available, and therefore, slugging it out with enemy forces is wasteful and self-defeating.

(4) Maximize visibility. Beginning a mission leaves the player with a vast blank screen; it is important to reconnoiter the area of operations as quickly as possible. It shows the player the objective and it allows a maximum warning time of enemy approach. Unlike reality, once an area has been "seen" it is always visible; one may argue that sensors have been placed or the area remains under observation by "detachments". Whatever the case, judicious use of the bookmark will prevent the player from unseen "surprises." The first time one plays a scenario will be more challenging since it is unknown territory; successive plays often allow one to understand the direction of the threat and respond accordingly.

Unit specific guidelines

Armor: Light (NOD)/Medium (GDI)/Mammoth (GDI)/Stealth (NOD). Generally, attacking enemy infantry by armor firepower is wasteful when roadwheels are so much more efficient and fun. Masses of infantry can quickly become simple tread grease if they are not sufficiently dispersed. GDI's heavier armor may be offset by NOD's cheaper acquisition costs and "cloak-

ing" device on the Stealth Tank. Of course, once the Stealth Tank opens fire, it pinpoints its position unless it can manage to disengage. A word of warning: while the Mammoth tank does have missiles, it will only use them against a target once; so turn away from the target and reacquire it in order to use another missile salvo.

Commando Infantry (GDI/NOD): Rambo returns; best used as a long range sniper threat or a demolitions expert.

Engineer (GDI/NOD): Effete intellectuals without any form of firepower or protection. However, like the pawn in a chess game, they have a threat to transform into something else, i.e. they may convert an enemy structure to a friendly site. While this often becomes an immediate target, one may quickly "sell" the structure for much-needed cash (obviously it pays to convert a higher cost structure)!

Harvesters (GDI/NOD): Not really a combat unit, although its defensive strength makes it a good choice for creating enemy "roadkill."

Flame Tank/Infantry (NOD): A massive threat to "soft" targets, these units have to be carefully employed. Like Commando Kelly during World War II, destroying an enemy flamethrower creates a vicious blast effect that causes massive collateral damage to anything in their vicinity. Thus, such units should be employed sufficiently distant from friendly forces. Then again, the use of an infantry flamethrower unit as a kamikaze can work wonders against an infantry force. Just remember that their ability to withstand enemy firepower is severely limited and they may be destroyed before penetrating the "kill zone."

Minigun Infantry (GDI/NOD): Basic grunts, these provide limited firepower; actually, their best use is as a target of opportunity for the enemy. Since enemy forces often seek the closest threat, it is better to lose a minigunner than a more expensive unit.

Orca (GDI)/Attack Helicopter (NOD): Tactical air is best employed in mass. Seek and destroy an enemy force or structure in a single bombing run.

Reconnaissance Units: HMMV (GDI)/Recon Bike (NOD)/Dune Buggy (NOD). Not intended to be part of the main battle line, these vehicles can often effectively engage enemy infantry in a "shoot and scoot" maneuver reminiscent of television's *Rat Patrol*. And for the really adventurous sorts, the recon vehicles may be able to steal past enemy defenses into a base camp and cause massive damage before they are finally destroyed.

RPG: Rocket Propelled Grenade launchers are available to both sides — GDI's bazooka and grenade infantry and NOD's rocket infantry. Best used in an anti-armor, anti-air, or anti-base role, these troops operate best in teams where their massed



Hitting <CTRL>- # key forms teams of units. Thereafter, a tap of the # key in question will select all members of that team. In addition to allowing you to select units in odd formations (admittedly a pointless task) this ability will greatly ease unit manipulation. For instance, you can assign all your infantry to a team, then with a tap of a key, select them and order them to pull back behind a line of armor

firepower can cause real damage. However, be careful that they do not become "road-kill" from armor or "crispy critters" from flame weaponry.

Rocket Launcher (GDI)/Mobile Artillery (NOD): The long distance carrier of **C&C**, these units should never be employed in the main battle line.

Troop Carriers (GDI): Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) and Transport Helicopters allow one to insert forces into a "hot" LZ quickly and effectively.

Terrain modifiers

Sandbags may be built by either side, and can often be used in an offensive mode! They can be built out to tiberium fields in order to deny their use to the enemy or even isolate an enemy harvester. And for those players who really want to rock the system, simply build sandbags out to the enemy base and construct defensive towers. Repairs are relatively cheap, and this can quickly render an enemy structure untenable. Or for that really cheap shot, use the sand bags to lock enemy forces into their base!

Tiberium fields regenerate, although slowly, so practice proper conservation techniques. Then again, computer infantry can often be enticed into following your light vehicles through tiberium fields. The radiation will quickly render them hors de combat.

Conclusions

Attrition warfare is often the most effective tactic against the AI. Build units until a sufficient force is available to overwhelm the defenders. Often, the AI will not be engaging in an arm's race, and your troops will effectively outnumber the AI opponent.

Of course, against a human opponent, attrition warfare will often lead to massive losses on each side and eventual exhaustion of tiberium. Maneuver will be the key to success against a fellow human.



Success in Command & Conquer often comes from hitting the enemy with overwhelming firepower, rather than clever tactics

Optimize your firepower. Determine the largest threat and destroy it first; do not be sidetracked by easy targets. Similarly, when attacking enemy bases, the defensive capabilities must be countered just to assure survivability. Thereafter, the barracks/Hand of Nod/airfield are a prime target just to prevent continuing reinforcements. Finally, the construction yard itself will be an attractive target to prevent the enemy force from reconstituting itself. If the enemy has duplicate facilities, the player must plan accordingly and not take unnecessary risks for little advantage.

Balance micromanagement against casualties and victory conditions. It does little good to optimally employ a dune buggy in a "shoot and scoot" firefight with enemy infantry when more expensive units or a base are the enemy's simultaneous target. Conversely, in a modern encounter, you may be able to sucker your opponent into just such a disadvantageous trade-off.

Finally, the law of land warfare does not apply to NOD forces. Therefore, civilian targets are always an option. GDI forces are rated for losses, and they should not engage noncombatants. ♦

M. Evan Brooks

Heroes of Might & Magic

Part 2: polishing the gem

If you like strategy games with a bit of fantasy thrown in, or fantasy games with a strategic bent, you probably already have and enjoy *New World Computing's Heroes of Might and Magic*. This little gem is not only one of the most enjoyable games of 1995, but has proven to have surprising staying power despite the lack of a random scenario generator or editor. One of the reasons for *Heroes'* continuing attraction has to be its depth of play. Surprisingly easy to get into, *Heroes* is also refreshingly challenging to win.

The strategic game in *Heroes* is predominantly about economics, building up armies and deploying them to deprive your enemies of the ability to do the same. On the strategic level, your military goal is to bring the enemy to battle on your terms. The tactical game is where you fight those battles and put your strategic planning to the test.

Several basic guidelines can help you succeed at the strategic level. The first is, *kill armies, not cities*. In *Heroes*, capturing a city does no damage to its component structures, or to the losing player's treasury. If you lose a city, you can just take it back. Losing *armies*, however, is much more painful. It can take weeks to replenish a good stack of high value units. So, if you kill your foe's troops, over time her cities will fall into your lap.

The second rule of good strategy helps you implement the first: *build few, strong stacks instead of many weak stacks*. Only heroes can command armies, so every army you send out will have a hero. A weak stack is just gargoyle fodder, and a great way to lose a leader. By building strong stacks, led by leaders with good stats and magic items, you can deploy powerful, survivable forces. By picking your armies carefully, and using magic, you can maintain enough mobility to compensate for having fewer forces in the field. Start the game with good combat leaders like knights

and barbarians; finish with warlocks and sorcerers, or build up those bully boys with magic items.

Always protect your economy while disrupting that of your enemy. Collect the loose piles of gold and resources near your starting city, and anywhere else you travel. Never miss a chance to swoop by a mine or laboratory. Transferring money and resources from your foes to yourself is a good way to win the war. This means protecting your resources, and that's tough. Generally, use strong stacks with dimension door capability and a good hero to "patrol" an area rather than static garrisons. The enemy doesn't usually attack castles that are strongly garrisoned, but what you think is strong is probably just an appetizer for that marauding warlock. Garrisons strong enough to really deter an attack are better used with heroes in the field. If you have to garrison a castle, use a stack with a hero, so you can bug out if necessary.

Except in "find the widget" scenarios, where speed is vital, play it safe. *Build up slowly, and wait for the enemy to make mistakes*. Pick off heroes who stray too close to your domain, and expand gradually using a killer stack or two. Win in a day, win in a year, it's all the same. You need to explore, of course, but avoid pitched battles unless sure you can win. When you do need speed, ignore most everything else. For instance, in Scenario 3 of the campaign, you have to find the Eye of Gorus; the first to do so wins. That makes your priorities clear: find obelisks, find the Eye. Build only enough to support your heroes and keep you in the game. If you dally, you'll find yourself bowing to some other hero who moved faster.

Capture your new home; don't build it! As for buildings, despite the need for good intelligence, thieves guilds are not very useful. By the time you build enough guilds to give you an accurate and useful picture, there are often only one or two opponents left. Besides, you can get better intelligence from

Spells by Level

Spell	Type	Level
View mines	A	1
Bless	C	1
Curse	C	1
Dispel magic	C	1
Protection	C	1
Slow	C	1
Teleport	C	1
Summon boat	A	2
View artifacts	A	2
Anti-magic	C	2
Blind	C	2
Cure	C	2
Haste	C	2
Lightning bolt	C	2
Turn undead	C	2
Identify hero	A	3
View heroes	A	3
View resources	A	3
View towns	A	3
Berzerker	C	3
Fireball	C	3
Paralyze	C	3
Resurrect	C	3
Storm	C	3
Dimension door	A	4
Town gate	A	4
View all	A	4
Armageddon	C	4
Meteor shower	C	4

spells, which give you great strategic and tactical information when properly used. As mage towers provide many other magical



The Ultimate Sword of Dominion: Go ahead, make my day...



All armies the same alignment — but the old warlock isn't too good with the troops...



Watch out for those plants; the wolves can't even move now...



A well balanced plains town...



A fireball might do the trick...



We don't need no stinkin' thieves' guild...

benefits as well, your resources are generally better used building them than constructing haunts for highwaymen.

Build armies early, magic late. In the beginning, a good stack of trolls and ogres is awesome; by the endgame, you will need to toss meteor showers and teleport spells about with abandon. It costs too much to build mage towers early, but you will need them later. As the really useful combat and non-combat spells only come with level 3 and level 4 towers, you can't skimp. Make sure that your best leaders have good spell casting abilities, via magic items and experience. And concentrate your magic items, too; it's better to have one leader with +10 to attack than three at +3.

Strategy is only a way for you to bring tactics into play effectively. Getting to the battle is half the problem. You *can* set up a relay of heroes to shuttle armies across a continent, however, if you plan correctly. Start with the troops you want to move under the command of a hero. Move the cursor over the next hero in line, so you get the double arrow symbol that indicates an exchange order, and move. Once the first hero gets to the second, swap off the troops to that second hero, then move that second hero to an exchange with a third, etc. Once you acquire good magic skills, however, the best way to get the fire brigade to the fire is the trusty dimension door spell, used repeatedly. Two or three casts will cover a lot of ground, and leave you with enough mobility to attack the stack you just appeared next to.

Once you get to the battle, you should fight smart. Use combined arms. Fast troops allow you to strike first; heavy troops absorb damage well. You *need* missile troops to win consistently. Your ranged weapons serve two purposes. First, they draw enemy fire like fire hydrants draw Dalmatians. The computer players will *always* attack the most dangerous missile units you have. You can use this to your advantage, of course, by attacking the attackers from their flanks. Secondly, your missile troops can devastate many enemy stacks before they ever get into range. Of course, if your troops fall victim to enemy spells or raiding gargoyles, you'll have to have the back up of powerful armies with lots of hit points. A good hero with a defense bonus really helps protect missile troops.

Though weak at first, *magic is crucial*. Build up your magical powers until you can teleport, toss lightning, and cast meteor showers. Use the lightning on single strong stacks, the meteors on a cluster of weaker units. Teleport spells are great for airlifting your cyclopes or hydras behind enemy lines, where their sudden appearance will no doubt cause dismay. Haste is another vital spell, as it makes slow units like ogres much more effective. And resurrection is great for top-end creatures like dragons and paladins; just be sure to cast it before the battle is over, as you can't resurrect outside of a fight. And don't forget the old berserker ploy; cast this on a unit in the midst of your foe's host and watch the fun begin. Just make sure you cast berserk on a unit that hasn't moved yet, or you'll just waste the spell.

Do not mix troop types; you do not want a multicultural army. You have four basic types of troops: plains, forest, farm, and mountain. With only one type of troop in an army, the morale bonus is +1. Two types is neutral, but three gets you a -1 penalty, and all four types nets you a whopping -2 on morale, guaranteeing that your troops will freeze and panic in combat. It makes no dif-

ference what the "alignment" of the hero is; any hero can lead any group of armies. Nomads, genies, and rogues don't seem to have any alignment, but they make it impossible to get the +1 bonus for having a homogeneous army. If you make sure to grab every morale and luck bonus you can before you fight, your one-alignment army will have a great advantage in combat; just watch your paladins take four lucky swings, and see whose standing in the end.

It is especially important that heroes who depend on magic have durable escorts. Nothing is as frustrating as having your high-level warlock with a zillion spells driven into exile because his escort of two archers and a peasant was zapped by ten sprites and an elf. Always remember *that leaders only support combat; they don't fight*. They are important, however, so don't be afraid to run away. Surrender, if you can afford it, or just flee, if it looks certain you are going down for the count. This is especially true if your hero is very experienced, or has many nifty geegaws with her. After all, you gotta be alive to be a hero... ♦

Robert Mayer

Overall average

Includes top unit in each group (i.e., all units that you can produce)

Alignment	Growth	HP	Speed	Attack	Defend	Min. Dam.	Max. Dam.	Cost
Overall average	5	37	2	7	6	5	10	465

First line is average of all units in an alignment; second line is average w/o the top unit

Alignment	Growth	HP	Speed	Attack	Defend	Min. Dam.	Max. Dam.	Cost
Ave. Farm	6	22	2	7	7	4	7	253
w/o Paladin	6	16	2	6	6	3	5	184
Ave. Forest	4	34	3	7	6	6	12	475
w/o Phoenix	5	20	2	6	5	3	6	270
Ave. Plains	5	32	2	7	4	5	8	338
w/o Cyclops	6	23	2	6	3	3	5	256
Ave. Mtn	4	59	3	7	7	7	14	793
w/o Dragon	5	31	3	6	6	3	6	352



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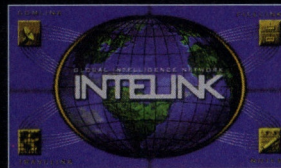
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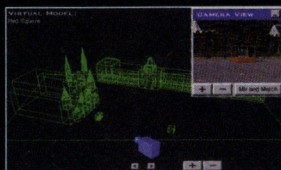
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ACTIVISION

Steel Panthers

Piercing the steel: Tips from the scenario designers

In 1977 I bought a board game that would forever change my perception of tactical wargaming. I opened the box; no cold, X-in-a-square NATO symbology cardboard counters here. These guys had guts, they had names – remember SGT Hill? And they led squads of men with distinct, detailed, national characteristics, in a gaming system with the most dynamic ebb and flow to ever grace a kitchen table. Of course, I'm talking about *Avalon Hill's* groundbreaking WWII tactical simulation, **Squad Leader**.

Eighteen years later, SSI's **Steel Panthers** has done for computers what **Squad Leader** did for kitchen tables. The game is an impressive compilation of gorgeous screenplay, realism, and up-all-night fun. Yet, as always, once the love-at-first-sight gush is over, the question remains: How do I win? Hopefully, this article will provide some insight into thrashing the silicon replicas of yesteryear's armies. To that end, I've managed to persuade a few **Steel Panthers** scenario authors (including myself) to give tips on scenario winning tactics. So grab your Thompson and clip on a couple of extra pineapples; we're going to take a whirlwind tour of the most famous battles of the Second World War. But first, before we find out exactly how to win "When Tigers Pounce" let's talk some generic tactics which help in any situation.

Steel Panthers is realistic; realistic tactics will win battles. The use of combined arms is a necessity. When approaching a strong point, village or wooded area, pepper potential fire team or anti-tank gun locations with artillery or machine gun fire. Even if your efforts don't spill blood, they may pin the unit or force a withdrawal.

Make good use of aircraft when available. This is especially true for the western Allies. Sometimes a Typhoon is your best bet to take out a Tiger. By the way, avoid calling airstrikes on adjacent enemy units; the pilots get easily confused.

Use smoke lavishly. I prefer to place smoke in front of – rather than on – enemy positions. That way, even if scattered, it does some good. A smoke mission which falls behind the enemy is useless. Infantry in **Steel Panthers** are given way more smoke



Russians swarm towards the water in "River Crossing"

grenades than their flesh and blood counterparts. Don't complain, just use it. The bad guys can't kill what they can't see.

The same goes double for armor. Perhaps it would be more apt to say "what you can't see can kill you." Get too aggressive with tanks, without infantry support, and you are sure to get a bloody nose. Try running the Panzers amuck in my "A Slap in the Face." You'll soon find out how deadly a 37mm anti-tank gun can be when fired at point blank range. Load troops on the armor; they help to spot ambushes and fend off enemy infantry assaults. Anyway, the GIs appreciate a lift. It's good for morale.

Here are some things that are *not* good for morale: adjacent enemy units, artillery bursts, incoming fire, dead platoon and squad leaders. To force units to surrender, pin them, move adjacent and pour on the lead. Artillery, even if not causing casualties, will frequently raise a unit's suppression level when landing on or next to it. Incoming fire is bad; so avoid it! Use cover, smoke, and friendly suppressive fires to limit your exposure. Especially keep the B0/C0/D0, etc. units out of harm's way. Losing a platoon leader will reduce your rally capability severely.

Rally frequently. The computer will attempt to rally units at turn's end. However, you should give it a try whenever a unit's suppression level reaches ten or more. Attempt to rally before firing; you may gain shots or accuracy. Units within five hexes of the AO will use his rally rating.

That's a baseline, now for some specifics.



Small unit tactics - An Italian squad pops smoke to avoid fire during the battle for Gela

Strategy Plus's first installment of **Steel Panthers** scenarios tips comes from John Welch. John designed eighteen of the original scenarios, in addition to working on several add on disks for David Landry's *Novastar Game Co.* So, in his own words...

A River Crossing

Like many operations during the opening months of Barbarossa, the Germans faced superior numbers. This scenario requires the German player to make maximum use of its artillery assets. Get a few squads quickly forward to the tree line, then use them to direct artillery fire into the massed ranks of the counter attacking Russians. Without careful use of artillery, superior numbers will overwhelm the German bridging and bridge-head forces.

When Tigers Pounce

An introductory scenario that is a real challenge for the Russian player. The Tiger platoon will make short work of your T 34/76's, so initial discretion could make for eventual valor. After the German fire phase, pull your tanks back and deploy your infantry into the buildings in town. Use cover and force the Germans to move in close, then counterattack. At close range, your T 34/76's and infantry can destroy or disable the Tigers. Time is on the Red Army's side, so wait for the flank and rear shot.

Singapore

Much of Japan's success in Singapore was due to the poor deployment of Commonwealth troops. As the Australian (British) commander, the key is to hold the northeastern roads and move the forces deployed north and west, south to Bukit Timah. Focus on river crossings and flank attacks to slow the Japanese forces. With better deployment, you can hold Bukit Timah and deny the Japanese the supplies they needed to continue the offensive.

Sidi Rezegh

Wargamers quickly discover that German armor was often inferior to Allied armor. In this scenario, the German player must first deal with the British AT guns located next to the airfield runways. Use the superior mobility of your Panzers to outflank the slower but more heavily armored British tanks and destroy them. The use of artillery is also critical to suppress British forces as your infantry moves across the "killing zone" to the airfield.

Counterattack

This scenario presents a formidable task for the Germans. You begin with a Russian attack on your column while it passes through an "undefended" town. Protect your panzers at all costs. Dismount the infantry and use APC's to clear the town. Keep pushing forward, but watch for ambushes. The clock is running so deciding how quickly you can proceed with or without infantry is the dilemma. Create two *kampfgruppen*, one armor-heavy the other infantry-heavy. Your armored *schwerpunkt* must have some infantry to deal with the close assault danger of Russian infantry. Once you approach the eastern village, use smoke to screen the Soviet AT guns until you can engage them with your armor. Push, push, push and hope the Russian air strikes aren't too successful.

Balkan Sideshow

The shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line. For the Germans

in Yugoslavia, the main road arteries were a series of ambushes and AT guns. To achieve victory, the German player should use the lightly armored but faster panzers to move south, across country before moving north to seize the key crossroads and artillery park while the heavier panzers and infantry pick their way down the main road.

Stinging the Bear

Due to the nature of fighting in Finland, finesse is difficult. In this scenario, the forces are equal, so commanders must focus on their strengths and the enemy's weaknesses. For the Russians, immediately move your armor into a hedgehog defense behind some infantry to screen it from Finnish AT weapons. Soviet tanks are poorly armored but have long range fire capabilities...use them. For the Finns, concentrate your forces to press a pincer attack on the base of the Soviet column where the road enters the eastern map edge. If you can destroy the artillery and divisional HQ, then a rear attack on the Russian armor is the coup de grace in a brilliant victory.

All That Glitters

The British tanks are the key. If the Germans can destroy or disable them, then victory is possible. For the British, success is unlikely without them. The beach is a dangerous place, but the British player must allow the Sherman Crabs and engineers to clear mines and dragon's teeth or the rush to get off the sand will end in a smoking ruin. Focus your fire power, of all calibers, on the German fortifications. Don't be afraid to use smoke to screen infantry as it assaults the coastal pill boxes; HE may not destroy the bunkers and could drift into friendly forces.

Pegasus Bridge

Historically, the British Paratroopers were able to seize and hold the Pegasus Bridge without great difficulty and the scenario plays that way. The real challenge is for the German player. The key to victory lies in the small counter attacking force northwest of the bridge. The panzers are a formidable weapon but the British Piat is a nasty AT weapon. Using combined arms tactics, scouting with your infantry and then digging out the paratroopers with tank cannon is a recipe for success.

That's it till next month. Then, we will cover more scenarios plus a few dirty tricks. Good gunning. ♦

Mark H. Walker



Tigers light up the hapless T-34/76 in "When Tigers Pounce."



A Zero attacks U.S. Marines on Wake Island



It's Japanese versus German in this hypothetical scenario



Polish 37mm ATG engages Pz-IIc during a replay of the author's "A Slap in the Face"

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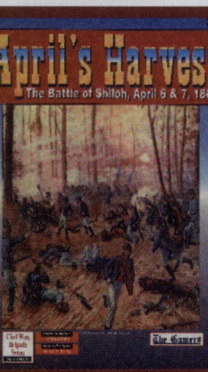
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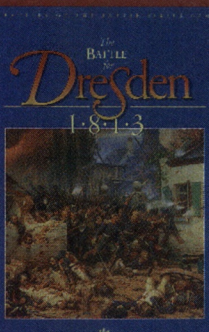
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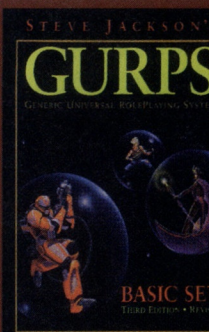
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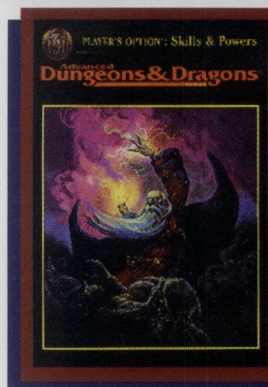
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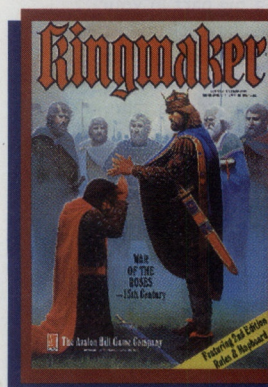
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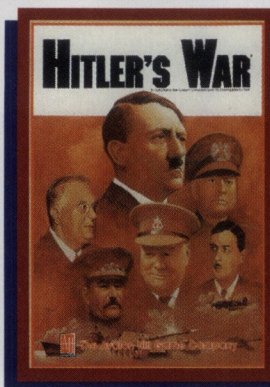
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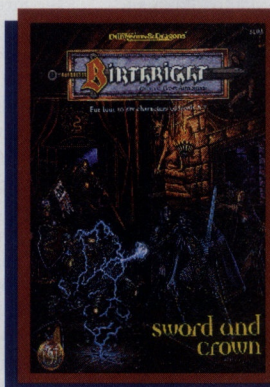
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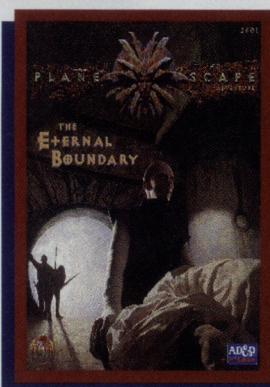
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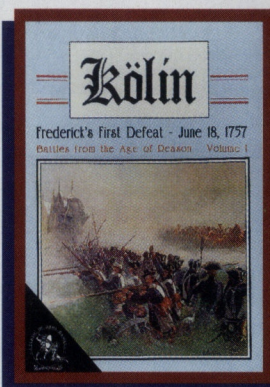
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blizzard entertainment home page
http://www.blizzard.com



Blizzard Entertainment is one of the newest and most exciting companies around. Their big breakthrough came with last year's tremendously popular **Warcraft: Orcs and Humans**. The sequel, **Warcraft II**, looks to carry on its predecessor's tradition of high-quality, real-time network play. I recently took a peek at Blizzard's home page, mainly to see what new projects they were up to. I hoped to find more than **Warcraft II**, and I wasn't disappointed.

pax imperia 2

Pax Imperia was a Macintosh-only game of space conquest. Though it never reached the PC, the game was very highly regarded by the strategy gamers who got a chance to play it, so a sequel was a logical next step. It wasn't surprising, therefore, to see **Pax Imperia 2** on Blizzard's list of forthcoming releases. This game promises to be a huge, sprawling design that offers the player billions of options regarding the game universe, ship design, research and technology, and even species design. It claims to include a detailed political and economic model, plus 3-D rendered space combat. Last, but hardly least, **Pax Imperia 2** will support 16 player network games, and will allow Mac and PC gamers to participate in the same network games.

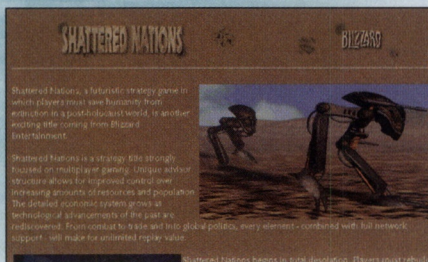
All in all, **Pax Imperia 2** looks to be a groundbreaking title, not in theme or plot ("Hey, guys. Let's go conquer the universe again.") but in scope and play value. Let's hope that the programmers can fit even half of what they've promised into the finished product.

shattered nations

Another forthcoming title from **Blizzard** will be **Shattered Nations**. Set in a Mad Max style universe, where players scavenge through the wreckage of a ruined civilization for anything that might be useful, **Shattered Nations** promises to be a little different than your average "rule the world"

strategy game. Instead of starting with a kingdom or a modest empire, the player begins with next to nothing. The first order of business is to build up a substantial population and start to reclaim the technology of the past.

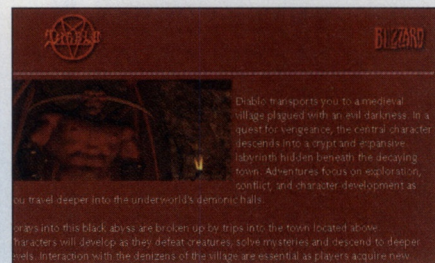
The concept is hardly revolutionary, since many games have borrowed the post-apocalypse mythos for a backdrop. However, very few of these games have succeeded in tapping the vast possibilities of such a world. A game where the player competes for limited resources, rediscovers old technologies, and expands a patchwork empire has great potential. With **Blizzard's** tradition of quality network play and solid game engines, it's my guess that **Shattered Nations** will be one of the first games in the post-apocalypse tradition to live up to its potential.



diablo

When you think of **Blizzard**, you definitely don't think of adventure or role-playing. Yet if you look at **Blizzard's** page of forthcoming releases, you will immediately notice **Diablo**, a game in a different vein entirely. As it says on the Web page: "Diablo transports you to a medieval village plagued with an evil darkness. In a quest for vengeance, the central character descends into a crypt and expansive labyrinth hidden beneath the decaying town. Adventures focus on exploration, conflict, and character development as you travel deeper into the underworld's demonic halls."

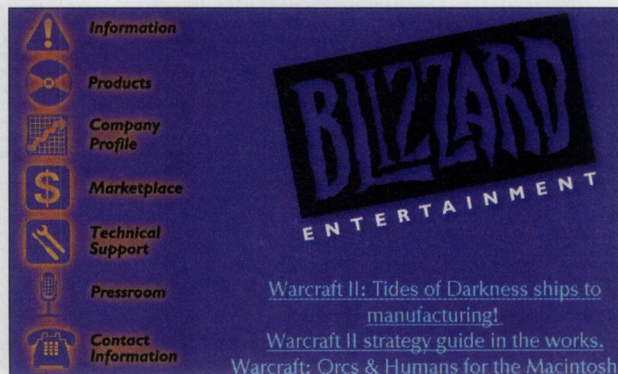
In other words, it's being billed as your standard RPG, complete with lots of combat and character development. However, this has the potential to be a really different RPG. First of all, it's claimed that charac-



ter interaction will play a big part in your quest. Now, lots of games have claimed this, I know... but we can keep on hoping that one of these days another game like **Ultima IV** will come along, reasserting the value of character interaction as well as simple-minded combat. Speaking of **Ultima**, the screenshots provided on the page suggest an isometric, **Ultima**-style view of the game: a refreshing change from the current trend of 3-D slugfests.

Another promising element: the upper world is limited to a single village. Why is this so promising? In this reviewer's humble opinion, too many RPGs try for a "grand scale" approach, where hundreds of cardboard-cutout citizens inhabit dozens of towns and cities. That's fine to a point, but it limits the individuality of each character. How long did you spend chatting with the folks in **The Elder Scrolls: Arena**? Not very long, I'd wager. Aside from their unique names, those citizens were all pretty much the same.

A game based in a village would allow much more scope for true interaction. With fewer characters to worry about, the game designers could ensure that each villager actually had something unique to say. In other words, a game like **Diablo** introduces the possibility of characters with... well, character. Let's hope that **Diablo** breaks some new ground in the area of character interaction, because quite frankly, this particular soil has gone untilled for quite some time. —jgb ☒



ici — the details confirmed kill developer's plans for the future

Start with a strong vision, add experience, talent, a willingness to listen and a reportedly solid financial base, and what do you get? The answer is a company called *ICI*. They are associated with developing the on line flight simulator **Confirmed Kill** along with *Domark* in the past. Now *ICI* has split from *Domark* and is poised to rise to new heights. I recently visited with them in Grapevine, Texas (near Dallas/Ft. Worth) for two days and saw what was developing. Let us review what they are, what they are working on and their future plans. So what is *ICI*?

ICI is a company composed of long time **Air Warrior** players, realism buffs and people who know the on line market. The CEO (Bob McCarthy) is an investment banker, and a real life pilot who knows how to raise money from a business background with many connections. He is *ICI*'s "business person." Fifty percent of the backers are pilots as well. A T-6 World War II advanced trainer (it had front line performance in 1937, according to the pilot's manual) is at a nearby airport for continual flying as reference. The head programmer (Dale) is as sharp a programmer as there ever was, and developed the coding for **CK**'s flight model. The art programmers (Boomer, Frying Tiger, Mx IX) are all top notch, with plenty of experience and **Air Warrior** background. "Killer" McQueen, operations vice president, and "Gunjam" Salinas of marketing have immense on line experience. In other words, these guys are "one of us" who want to see on line gaming done right. What is going on now at *ICI*?

I got the feeling of blunt honesty and forthrightness. If something does not match my flight tests, *ICI* people are blunt and admit that it needs work. It has always been like that, whether with John McQueen or



Pyro. They are open to new ideas. Their goal is to get it right and succeed on line. They look as if they are headed on the way... as soon as they completely split from *Domark*. They are hiring an aeronautical engineer/former fighter pilot as a consultant to work on the flight models. *ICI* also hired someone else to oversee just the flight model aspect, (Doug "Pyro" Balmos, known as a die-hard perfectionist).

When I was there, I saw work on the flight simulator currently known as **Confirmed Kill** (*ICI* is considering a name change). After the split with *Domark*, *ICI* kept the flight engine and developed a new high speed graphics engine from **F-18 of Graphics Simulations** (this is on line currently). In the new polygon based graphics engine, details pop up at you as you get close to the ground. Trees, fields, bushes and other objects give you plenty of warning that you are nearing the ground. The ocean has definite texture, and even changes as you get closer to it. Now, enemy airplanes appear sharper at longer distances so you can better see what they are doing and react to them faster (a major problem with flight simulators). The polygons hold their

shape until you are very close to them... even then, they do not break up as badly as other polygon based flight simulators, thanks to the new engine. How are the aircraft interiors?

They're jaw-dropping excellent. They are bitmapped and drawn as if from real life paintings. They completely transform the simulator into a believable situation. The Spitfire is so real you have to blink. Artists meticulously measure out Spitfire roundels to the scale inch. All the instruments work, no matter what angle you look at them.

Let us look at the flight models. Dale and Doug Balmos have been tweaking them. Many airplanes fly more realistically in version .92. The Zero now has its ailerons freeze at higher speeds, as they should. The Zero is also correctly more controllable at slow speeds as a World War II flight test by Eric Brown mentions.

Future plans? In terms of the future of the *ICI* flight sim, known as **CK** at the time of this writing, rolling terrain is going to be added. More ground details will be added as well. In the future, the effects of the sun are planned to be added. This will mean being able to use the sun to simulate actual tactics. The effects of the gun recoil on the airplane is also planned soon. The flight models will be modified even more as they head for more authenticity. In the far term future, *ICI* is looking into including clouds. Think of the cat and mouse games we'll be able to play then!

Generally, *ICI* looks like a group of dedicated people with a mission. *ICI*'s flight simulator can be downloaded from their web page at <http://WWW.Cris.Com/~Gunjam> or the FTP site icigames.com or Cactus.org. Keep them flying, *ICI*! —r.o. X

virgin & westwood studios home pages <http://www.vie.com> & <http://www.westwood.com>

"Welcome to Zesty Bytes" indeed. *Virgin*'s web site has a rather cool look to it, with its fast food motif carried throughout. You can find some "tasty samples" of their current releases (at press time, **11th Hour** was the main one). They promise gamers "tasty support" if their software doesn't work (we'll see how tasty the beforementioned **11th Hour** leaves everyone). Some "corporate additives" will help keep those interested in the business side of things from getting spoiled, and a message board called "Club Chat-n-Snack" is there if you're feeling talkative. Some "new taste sensations" are there to inform you of the latest

batch of heavily hyped and eternally delayed *Virgin* treats like **Heart of Darkness** (it's release date of the month is 3rd Quarter 1996, which is a slip from Q1 96, which was a slip from Q4 1995, etc.). If you're still feeling hungry, you can find some "related treats" for links to *Virgin* cohorts like *Looking Glass* and *Westwood Studios*.

Speaking of *Westwood*, their site has received a visual upgrade from the time of our last visit and also looks quite spiffy. Available via ftp from the site is the update to **Command & Conquer** as well as information about where to find a game of **Monopoly** on the big bad Internet. —s.b. X





Interactive movies marked for death

Since a critic is, by definition, self-indulgent, I've decided that this month's journey, my last down the Road to Nowhere before I hand it over to the more than capable Cindy Yans (*feel the pain*), should be even more self-indulgent than normal. Send the kids to bed. Put the dogs outside. Put the cat in the microwave. Hide the cutlery. It's going to get ugly (though extremely difficult, in light of this topic, to self-indulgently make yet another blatant **Sam & Max** reference). I've decided to go all out and tell you what I hate about games.

I hate:

Illogical rooms and locations

OK, let me get this straight. This is the king's main room of his castle and there's a trap right in the middle of it. Hmm, wonder what the visiting dignitaries thought of that as they plummeted to their deaths? Why would a castle have a dungeon full of nasty monsters underneath it? Didn't the parents worry that their kids might wander down there and turn up dead? And how exactly did all of the creatures end up in the halls of **Stonekeep**? Were they just burrowing holes in the ground at random and happened upon this buried castle?

Fantastic fantasy worlds

I'm sick of the fairy-tale kingdom run by a great leader that is under attack from some long dormant evil being that was once banished and now seeks its revenge. Please. Stop already. Let's put the UPE (Ultimate Personification of Evil) to rest once and for all.

People who think Myst was the first game ever released

The mass media is the biggest culprit of this. How many articles have you seen where it begins with some bold pronouncement like, "**Myst** heralds a new breed of interactive fic-

tion?" Please. Give me a break. It may be the first game that particular bozo has ever seen, but it's a slap in the face to every person who made all of those superb interactive fiction titles during the 1980's. You also have to wonder, when you realize that the media botches an easy (and rather meaningless) story like this, what is really happening in places like Bosnia. Scary, eh?

Myst-style games in general

I liked **Myst**. Really. But remember this. When you read that a game other than **Myst** features, "A world steeped in mystery... a beautiful landscape that will immerse you in its world... a haunting experience," and other pseudo new-age crap, run for your lives. These "interactive experiences" feature little in the way of interactivity and are merely toys for yuppie nerds (is that a nuppie?) who think they're somehow above the concept of a game. Screw them if they don't get **Riddle of Master Lu**. If you want pictures, buy an Ansel Adams book.

The Quentin Tarantino influence

Wunderkind Tarantino (writer/director of the vastly overrated *Pulp Fiction*) will prove to be the most horrid influence in game writing for the near future. Almost every designer, and the gaming public in general, seem to think that he's a God, which means we'll see more and more hyper-violent games peppered with pop-culture references (extra points for obscurity) and naughty language (ooh, it's so daring). Of course he stole everything he knows from Elmore Leonard (and others), so if you really want to do this stuff, at least go to the source (let's see, Leonard stole a bunch from Chandler, and Chandler stole from...oh hell, why not - Edgar Allan Poe).



Beavis and Butt-head - this game, like, huh huh, rules

People who say things like, "Oh, you takes these games too seriously... it's just fun to me" when you dare criticize a game

It's impossible for me to have any respect for a gamer who will take just about anything that a publisher cares to dish out. If we never stop to consider how these things we call games can get better, they never will.

Interactive movies

This is a big surprise. Like anyone actually likes them? The next time you're thinking about making a game with live-action video featured prominently, ask yourself this question: is this providing an experience that is different enough from film to justify my spending \$60 for it, when I can rent something that's probably better written, acted, and directed for all of two bucks (or sit in a theater for \$7, or buy a film for \$19.99)? If it isn't, kill it before it kills us all.

So what do I like? Well, I like **Beavis and Butt-head** quite a bit. It rivals **Riddle of Master Lu** in length as well as quality. Go figure. **Stonekeep** was a snooze for the first three levels and I've never come back to it (note to designers - don't make the beginning of the game boring and monotonous). Oh, there I go again. Criticizing away. Someone stop me before I piss someone else off.

If you hate something, let me know at splus@together.net. I love to hate. And let's welcome Cindy to the fold of nowhere people. Cindy, the road is yours. Take it wherever it leads you. ♦

Steve Bauman



Riddle of Master Lu - this is a GAME



(figure 1)

THE HARD WAY.

Bring Home *Real* Pinball Action



(figure 2)

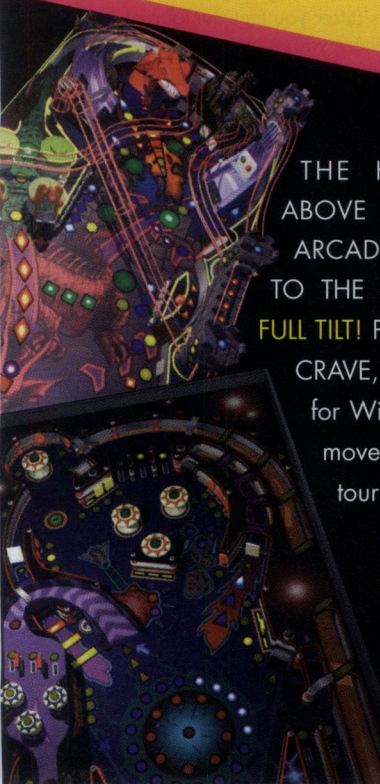
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Now Warlords is in SVGA, what fun!

'Twas the morning after Christmas, and all through the Boots of Re, not a creature was stirring, not even me. I was dozing in my chair—eyes dusted with sand, a pint of ASCII still gripped in my hand—when all of a sudden there rose such a clatter, I awoke yelling, "What'n hell's t'matter?!"

Do I have a Christmas tale for you. I was thinking of rhyming it all, but there just wasn't time. It seems that Santa tried to deliver presents to all the various monster children in my starter dungeon below the Inn and got cornered by some Trolls who'd never heard of "Sandy Claws." One of his reindeer managed to fight his way to the main entrance, and that was what woke me — the banging of his antlers against the dungeon door. So, that's what I did the day after Christmas. Rescued Santa. Well, I didn't do it alone. "Did I, boys..."

Uh, excuse me, a moment, while I chat with Bashed, Battered and Bewildered. All right, guys, that's enough. Stop singing "Unca, with your nose so bright, won't you guide my sleigh tonight?"

Unca's box of Christmas chocolates

Stonekeep was the best of the Christmas CRPGs (No, I haven't seen **Daggerfall**, **Druid** or **Anvil of Dawn**, yet). It takes some patience to adjust to the interface, but **Stonekeep** is outstanding in so many other ways, it's my pick for best CRPG of the past several years.

Heroes of Might and Magic is much more of a strategy, than a role-playing game but is a chocolate pecan treat for both kinds of gamers. What a terrific game! I play it every spare moment I can. When I'm not playing **Warlords II Deluxe**, that is. Heh-heh.

Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster (starring Tim Curry) is an adventure gamer's caramel. The graphics are outstanding and Tim is camping it up as the good doctor. If you like intriguing puzzles

Ol'Unca Andy's mythical Inn and spell of last resort for solving adventure puzzles. If all else fails, just re-boot ! Heh-heh...

with your adventures, **Ripley's Believe It or Not: The Riddle of Master Lu** may be just the game for you. Amazing graphics, too.

For those of you who love science fiction adventures, in the *Star Trek* vein, take a serious look at *Legend's Mission Critical*. It begins with the familiar hole-in-the-hull-that-needs-to-be-fixed-on-an-empty-ship puzzle, but provides edge-of-the-seat-excitement.

I haven't seen **Gabriel Knight II**, yet, or I suspect it would also be in this past year's box of Christmas chocolates.

Exile is an extra fine shareware CRPG available in WinFun and Gamers on CompuServe. It's an overhead view game, with icons that move across a flat map, much as in an **Ultima IV** or **V**. Internet subscribers, write to jvogel@eden.rutgers.edu for more information.

Mission Critical

Let's get the hull fixed to get you started on this adventure: Read the Captain's note. Go forward. Turn Right. Use the Computer Terminal. Ask all the questions. Open the Emergency Stores Cabinet above the terminal. Take the Hull Patch Kit. Turn left. Go forward. Turn Left. Open the door. Go forward, twice (towards the left the second time). Use the viewscreen controls and watch the video. Turn Right. Go Forward. Open the door. Go forward. Open the door. Click on A3X5. Go forward. Take the crew manifest and read it. Take note of Deck 2 and 3 VIS Override codes. Turn Right. Open the door. Go forward. Turn left. Go forward (three times). Turn left. Open the door. Go



"Do you think Stonekeep is the best CRPG of the year?" "I dunno, I haven't seen Daggerfall, yet."

forward and open the boxes of EC2061 Spares, EC1999 Spares, EC2010 Spares, and EC2001 Spares. Read the note from the empty Spares box. Turn right. Open the door. Go forward. Turn left. Go forward. Turn left. Go forward. Turn right. Open the door (to the right) click on B29X, Open the kit box. Spray the Gel-Foam spray on the hull puncture. Put the molecular glue on the patch. Plug the hull puncture with the patch.

Voila! The ship is saved!

Stonekeep

For those of you who can't wait for the walk-through, here are a few **Stonekeep** getting started tips. Think of the game in terms of maps, not levels (after you find the journal, it will automap where you've been and where you go). The first map shows the entrance tower. There are three other towers that can be accessed from the corners of level one



The storeroom with all the spare parts in Mission Critical



The Afri-orb in Stonekeep projects a map of the immediate vicinity, if it's placed on the ground in front of you

(map two). The southeast corner leads to a tower with a healing fountain. Until you find it, eat healing roots after a battle.

The two Shargas in the center room of level one can be killed and must be to get a key that opens the doors leading to level two (map three). The best battle tactic in the game is to kill monsters from a distance with ranged weapons. You can throw arrows you find at these two Shargas and kill them safely from the other side of an open door. To get them to the door you may have to run in, turn around and run out. You can also throw a throwing ax, fire bombs, rocks and/or skulls.

On map three, the Wahooka (king of the elves) wants gems he'll trade for clues. They're not great clues, so if he doesn't show up, you're not missing anything.

The ivory key will open up the sewer doors (two separate entrances). The ivory key is in an unlocked room, but guarded by a green blob you can also kill with arrows thrown from the doorway. To get the iron key (needed to open the mage's room where the magic rune-caster is, along with a green recharge Mana circle) there is a false wall beside a hallway off an east/west corridor leading to the group of cells, the last one holding the ivory key. Go through the false wall and battle the Sharga. He will drop the iron key.

In the sewers, search the water with your cursor to find two cylinders (one down each stairway from map three). Search the areas where Drake stubs his toes. Kill a tentacle creature behind a moving wall (which won't move until you find and install the cylinders). It will drop a dragon statue which is used in a room on map three accessed in the sewers (map four) by squeezing through a wall near where you find the statue. The wineskin can be filled at a healing fountain.

When using the magic to heal yourself or other party members, click on the direction jewel on the mirror line, after right clicking to bring up the rune stick.

Use the magic circles for healing and recharging. Eventually you'll have teleport spells to take you to your favorite nearby recharging circle.



Heroes of Might & Magic

Be patient, and remember that the deeper you go, the better the game gets.

Heroes of Might and Magic

This is a hard game to win at first, even at the default values (normal difficulty, average opponents). There's no shame in customizing the way you play the scenarios. Eliminate one or even two of the three opponents if you have to. Make them all dummies. Whatever it takes to get you through a scenario. Don't worry, you'll soon have mastered the scenarios at that level of play and be able to move on to the more difficult settings.

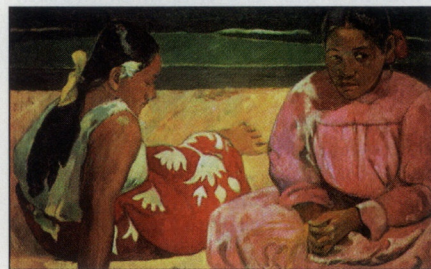
For a joke, I turned the settings to the most difficult on *Claw*. Genius opponents, the whole works. I thought I'd get wiped out in a round or two. Guess what? I won! Heh-heh. One hundred and forty points! I went to the top of the Hall of Fame list. The point isn't that I'm a great **Heroes** player. It's just that some of these scenarios are easier to win than you would think.

The dragons are the most powerful creatures in the game, but only because magic can't be used against them. A squad of Phoenixes can wipe out a herd of Dragons, however.

Try the campaign game for an additional eight scenarios. The last campaign scenario is the most difficult (King of the Hill).

From beyond the pail

Norman J. Schoonebeek writes, "What is Unca?!" Good question, Norman. My handle on CompuServe was for many years Uncle Andy. Then, mostly in homage to Carl Barks'



"I'm peeved. I got every game mentioned in Unca's Christmas Chocolates." "What's wrong with that?" "I don't have a computer!"

stories about Unca' Donald Duck, I shortened the handle to just plain Unca.

Sean Piche writes, "What ever happened to Snake Eyes?" Sean has written me from Germany several times about many things, but Snake Eyes was one of the names of this column before it became Boots of Re.

Peeve of the month

No peeve. Hey, what do you want from me? I wasn't angry at anything this past month. It was Christmas! So, a no-prize for a no-peeve to the fat man with the glowing nose.

Merry after-Christmas and Isten veled (a Hungarian farewell)

I'll be back next month with more astute, agreeable advice. In the meantime, request assistance in solving adventure puzzles from Unca at [StrategyPlus](mailto:StrategyPlus@compuServe.com) or 71202,3451@compuServe.com. ♦

Andy Backer

The Dig

Designed by Sean Clark
Published by LucasArts
Platform DOS

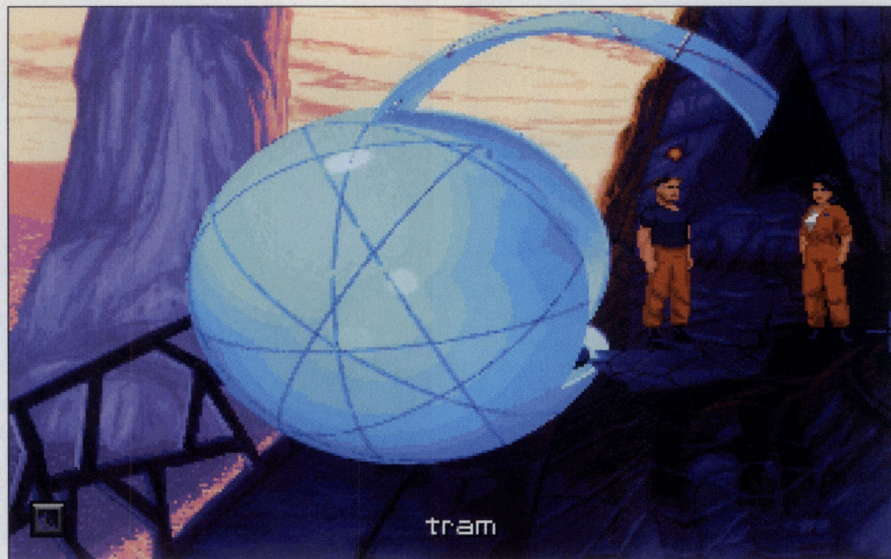
If any game in recent memory has a lot to live up to, it's LucasArts **The Dig**, the game with the magic name attached to it (that would be the master of magic himself, Mr. Steven Spielberg). With development dating back to the Jurassic era (ouch) and every major LucasArts staff member seemingly having a hand in it at one time or another (from Noah Falstein to Ron Gilbert to Brian Moriarty), it's just asking for you to have higher expectations than normal. Let's start with some of the built-in problems.

Problem 1. That Spielberg connection. His name was on it. His name was off it. It was allegedly an idea he had for a film or an episode of his series *Amazing Stories*. It was deemed unfilmable because it would cost too much to make (erm, and I suppose bringing dinosaurs to life sounded cheap?). Author Orson Scott Card was brought in to rework some of the dialogue as well.

Problem 2. It's been in development for many years and looks it. The whole graphic look has **Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis** written all over it, which isn't such a bad thing except that **Indy** was released in 1992. It isn't up to the high standards set by **Sam & Max, Day of the Tentacle**, or **Full Throttle**.

Problem 3. It makes a weak attempt at star power by including Robert Patrick, known for his nearly silent role in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, as the main voice "talent." Emotion would not appear to be Mr. Patrick's strongest quality; and as a whole, **The Dig** has the weakest vocal performances ever in a LucasArts game. A particular weak spot is the female lead, who admittedly isn't given much to work with, but who still manages to sound bored even when faced with her imminent death.

For those who aren't familiar with the story, **The Dig** was intended to be a combination of two classics, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *Forbidden Planet*. An asteroid is plummeting to earth and it's up to you, Boston Low, to command a mission to detonate some nuclear devices on it in order to avert its deadly path. Upon doing this, you find it's actually a spaceship of some sort and you, along with two companions, are sent to



The trams provide some of the best visuals in the game, with cut scenes good enough you'll actually watch them each time you ride one of these things

a far-away world which appears to be devoid of life. Over the course of the game you will discover the aliens who sent for you, and be forced to solve a number of puzzles that will help you escape your fate.

Overall, **The Dig** is without question the most uneven project LucasArts has ever done, with a schizophrenic graphic style that varies between decent 3D modeled animations, beautiful low-resolution background art, and thoroughly unimpressive flat-looking 2D character animation. The characters don't come to life like you've come to expect from a LucasArts adventure, and are devoid of personality. The dialogue is at times unintentionally hilarious, and downright bad at others (especially in some of the "dramatic" scenes). The humor in the game is forced and stilted.

Equally schizo is the puzzle design, which veers from downright clever to downright illogical. Most of the puzzles feature the ultimate cliché – opening the closed door. At least designer Sean Clark chose to keep the door design consistent throughout, and they do blend into the fiction as well as any other game (it's an alien world – why would it have

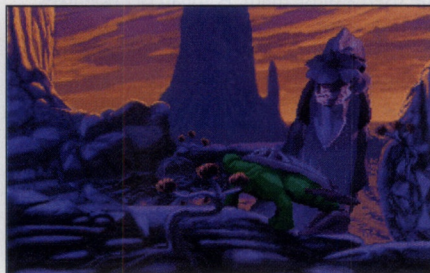
locks like ours).

So yes, **The Dig** is a mess, as you might have expected from a game that has passed hands from designer to designer and featured multiple restarts from scratch. Perhaps it was some sort of perverse fascination with the project that made me want to complete it, to see where the story would go, to see what all of this talent over the years was up to. Judged as a single entity, **The Dig** is still better than many adventure games on a number of different levels, but, much like **Full Throttle**, it doesn't match the previous standards set by LucasArts. I can't help but think of the parallel of a Martin Scorsese or Spielberg, who make a great film only to have it be an artistic failure in the eyes of a critic or the public because it doesn't match up to whatever past classic that person chooses to compare it to. **The Dig** isn't a failure or a disaster by any means, but it is a disappointment. With a lot of competition out there, and some recent near-classics by other companies, it's hard to work up much of a recommendation for it. ♦

Steve Bauman



This puzzle sure made me happy that I'd passed that alien autopsy course at Roswell University



This is an example of how good the game can look...



...and this is an example how average it can look

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The 11th Hour

Designed by Trilobyte, Inc.

Published by Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Platform DOS

Remember when the children of a certain toymaker's village started to die? No, not at the North Pole... no, not Pinocchio's dad, jeesh! Apologize to Santa and Gepetto. Now! There, that's better. OK, I'll give you a hint: "There once was a lad from Nantucket..." Oops, never mind. All right then, the gentleman (?) to whom I am referring is one Henry Stauf, the depraved toymonger of **The 7th Guest**. If this does not ring a bell, no matter. And if it does, then perhaps you are one of the pacers and droolers who have long been awaiting the sequel to Virgin's aforementioned hit title. Finally, here it is. **The 11th Hour** sits on your drugstore shelf (you *do* get your drugs of choice from software distributors, I hope), providing you with a passageway back to the Stauf mansion. And what a journey it is. Trilobyte has done it again — in spades! A puzzle game it is, certainly, but with production values rivaling any interactive multimedia title on the market today.

We are presented with over 65 minutes of full-screen, full motion, high resolution video unraveling the mystery behind the bizarre murders which have been occurring in Stauf's hometown. You play the character of Carl Denning, investigative reporter for television's "Case Unsolved." Your producer, Robin Morales, has disappeared during the murder investigation, and since she is also your lover, you feel compelled to search for her. Sure, producers are a dime a dozen, but after all, hot babes like Robin (said heat being an assumption from a steamy opening scene) can be found only after tireless evenings at singles clubs, perusing limitless personal ads, spending billions of hours at church socials, signing up for mambo lessons, or undergoing an embarrassing appearance on "Love Connection." Better to risk your life in Stauf's clutches.

The first person graphic perspective is back, but **11th Hour's** tech team has outdone itself with remarkable depth perception and scrolling views. You're not just watching — you are *there*. You view Stauf's dark world from behind your battery powered torch, and it really appears as though you are holding a shaky flashlight as you progress through the shadowy mansion. What you *do* watch, however, are the video clips of the story's progression. And they are absolutely top-notch, most of them having been filmed on location. In fact, only 18 minutes of footage consist of "blue screen" video.

One of the main differences between this production and its predecessor is that in addition to solving puzzles, you are on a scavenger hunt of sorts. You receive clues along your journey about certain objects that you must find in order to progress. The clues are often in the form of puns or anagrams, and upon selecting the correct object, you receive another clue to take you on your

way. Some of the findings result in a video flashback scene involving Robin's involvement in the investigation, or reveal other pieces of the murder mystery. All scenes are stored for review in your portable video recorder. Take notes, though, folks. There are over 250 selectable objects throughout the mansion, so you might find yourself wandering about *forever* saying "now where did I see that thingamabobbit?" Luckily, there are online hints and a nice online mapping feature to keep you on track.

Diehard puzzle fans might flinch a bit at the need to solve 42 scavenger-hunting quests along the way, but the straight puzzles themselves (13 logic puzzles and 6 AI games) are satisfying. Many are very reminiscent of the puzzles from **The 7th Guest**, chess and pattern puzzles, math logic, etc., with a few additional innovations, and vary in difficulty. Again, online hints are available, in the form of your "Techno-Psychic Ally". And this is a *real* psychic, my friends — none of those hotline phonies or cheap imitations. The Amazing Kreskin and Dionne Warwick would be proud. Your Ally will render everything from a task description right down to an offer to solve the game for you. But be warned that her psychic abilities wane when taxed (kinda like our incomes) and if relied



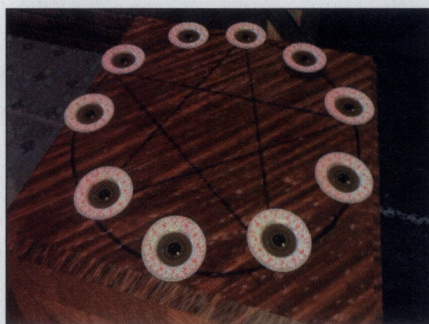
An outpatient from the Tchaikovsky Institute for Mental Health

upon too much, she will be unable to give you the help you may need at a later point.

Some might argue that for a puzzle game, this is way overproduced. Why do we need all of these bells and whistles? The puzzles should be the heart of the game, after all. Well, don't worry, they are — all accompanied by an evil voice to taunt you during what are certain to be some hapless attempts at solution.

Add a bigger story? Sure, why not? More than the children are dying here. And hooray for that. Stauf's back — with a vengeance! ♦

Cindy Yans



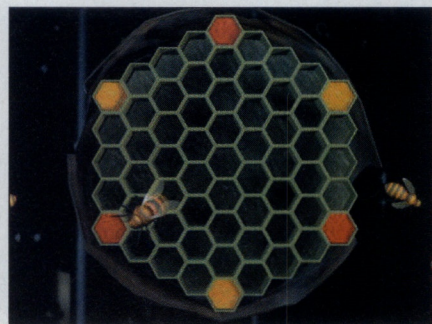
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Lead Game
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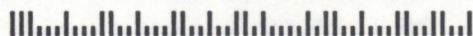
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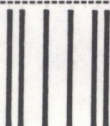
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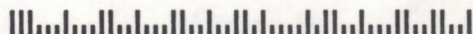
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Stonekeep

Designed by Chris Taylor
Published by Interplay
Platform DOS

The first few levels of Interplay's long awaited **Stonekeep** may disappoint some hard-core role-playing gamers.

The interface doesn't include recent advances in CRPG movement, such as being able to look up and down and side-step, let alone jump and fly. The story is set in what is initially a dimly lit gray dungeon without even flickering wall lamps. Healing after one runs out of healing roots can involve many tedious treks to healing fountains.

The patient gamer, however, will play through these levels to get to the exciting and brilliantly conceived levels further below. No matter what the opening levels are like, **Stonekeep** is still the best CRPG I've played for several years.

The game was designed to broaden the base of CRPG players, hence the slow opening. The first levels serve as an introduction to role-playing. Features (such as automapping, note-taking, item identification, party members, weapons, armor, magic, teleports, varied settings) are only slowly added as the player character finds them.

The game gets better, the deeper the player character goes down. The monsters get tougher, the puzzles harder, the party more varied as the story unfolds. Soon the gamer is completely addicted to this fantasy game of gods, humans, fairies, dwarves, shargas, throgs, singing brownies, trolls, etc., and the largest dragon ever to cross a computer screen.

The gamer discovers the story as Drake (the player character) uncovers scrolls and meets characters who bicker in much the same way **Jagged Alliance's** characters do, except the **Stonekeep** character dialogues, songs, jokes, complaints, etc. also advance the story line.

Technically, the sound effects, voice-overs and music are outstanding the best ever. The graphics may not be state of the art, but still serve well enough, especially because the video cut-scenes blend seamlessly with the animations and dungeon settings (how many games can claim that)?

The plot is simple; another foozle needs to be defeated to restore the balance between



Isn't this the face of a used car salesman?

good and evil. But that's not what the real story is all about, anyway.

It's the relationships between the peoples of the world that intrigue me. For example, for three levels I happily killed shargas (kobold or gremlin-like creatures). And then I discovered that the shargas were slaves of the Throgs, truly evil human creatures who worship a six-armed God.

Killing more shargas at that point became a moral dilemma for me. I was following a sharga who ran behind a door and locked it. When I tried to open it, the sharga rasped out, "What's the password?" Because Drake had caught a glimpse of sharga's being beaten by a whip-wielding throg, he was able to say, "Don't worry, I hate throgs, too."

"Yep, that's the password, all right," happily said the sharga and the door opened.

Later, I even added a sharga to my party!

On the fairy level, I had a sharga, kobold and a fairy in my party, listening to a very funny troupe of brownies sing ribald songs about dwarves having hairy necks, etc., making the dwarf in my party particularly unhappy. The Brownies' songs (there are several others) are a highlight of the game, and remind me of drunken science fiction fans crammed into a hotel room at a convention, singing their song parodies. Some of the songs have clues, too!

The sharga (I think his name is Scuz) in my party asked "Why are they called brownies if they're moss-green?" My dwarf replied in an ominous tone, "Come here and I'll explain it to you." Heh-heh.

The dragon I discovered a piece at a time, beginning with the tip of its tail. I didn't know it was a dragon at the time. I thought it was



Snakes on land or in the water make formidable opponents

the head of a huge worm at first, and started hacking at it. The tip whipped back and forth a couple of times and my party was destroyed. I rebooted and changed my mind about attacking it.

Later, I opened some other doors at great distances from the tail and saw a foot here, a piece of breathing, glittering torso there and finally a huge head. When I released the dragon ("Are you daft, releasing a dragon?!" a dwarf cried out) the sight of that dragon majestically gliding past the door was quite moving, a graphic treat.

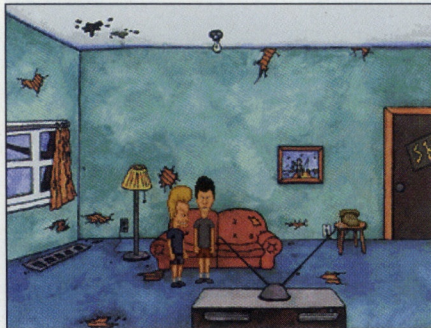
The bottom line is that **Stonekeep** features excellent game-play and is overall a fun-filled experience. It may not be a role-playing game that will please the very demanding state-of-the-art junkies, but it will do just fine for the rest of us. Just remember to be patient in the beginning and know that the deeper you go the better it gets. ♦

Andy Backer



Dwarves all tend to look alike

Beavis and Butt-head in Virtual Stupidity



Beavis' home, dank and depraved – try as he might, he cannot escape his upbringing

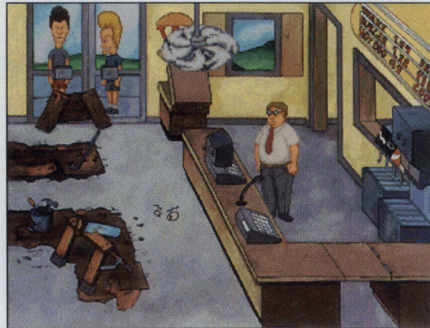
Love them or loathe them, MTV's own *Beavis and Butt-head* have teamed up for their first point-and-click adventure, **Virtual Stupidity** from Viacom New Media. This excellent game features dialogue written by Sam Johnson and Chris Marcil, who are writers from the show, and the voice of Mike Judge as Beavis and Butt-head. The dialogue sparkles with pearls of wisdom like the following:

Beavis: "If tennis started with a P, it would be cool."

Butt-head: "Yeah, it already has balls."

While on the surface it would appear that this is merely a staggeringly stupid (and hilarious) adventure that is absolutely true to its source material, bubbling underneath is a serious examination of what it's like to be young, white and stupid in today's cruel, harsh world.

The plot takes our existentialist heroes through a tumultuous journey worthy of Conrad – a journey into their own heart of darkness, if you will. They will have to confront all of their fears as they try to gain admittance to an elite club: Todd's gang. A gang, yes, but it also represents their ascendency into something altogether more frightening – Beavis and Butt-head are becoming



The future for our heroes – permanent low-paying jobs as cashiers at Burger World

men, trapped in a world that regards them as nothing but a pair of morons.

Throughout the journey, we laugh at Beavis and Butt-head (but not with them because, as true innocents they do not even realize how tragic their plight is), but at times the pain that we feel for them is so unbearable we find ourselves choking back tears. Assisting us is a point-and-click interface, designed to reduce Beavis and Butt-head's complex existence to a few icons, which itself is symbolic of a society trying to simplify complex ideas into sound-bites and catch phrases ("Generation X," is what immediately springs to mind).

The main characters are as complex as any found in the works of Proust. You have Butt-head, the leader of the pair, an existentialist who is often misunderstood as a misogynist idiot. That couldn't be further from the truth. He just has difficulty articulating complex ideas; each, "Uh, huh huh," should be construed as an attempt to put forth his alternative viewpoints.

You also have Beavis, the nearly silent and possibly brain-damaged one, who represents the submissive side of our personality – he is

often at the mercy of (or the butt of, if you prefer) Butt-head's cruel jokes (on another note, the sexual tension between the two is often unbearable). It doesn't take a psychologist to point out that these characters are obviously examples of the duality of human psyche (the id vs. superego).

Along the way, Beavis and Butt-head will encounter all sorts of authority figures who want nothing but to impede their progress and keep them trapped in juvenilia. These include Buzzcut, a stern authoritarian figure who represents government oppression of the stupid classes; Daria, who frightens our heroes by being the strong woman Beavis and Butt-head wish their mothers were; and their hippie teachers, who represent the failed idealism of the liberal 60's.

Their journey to adulthood is fraught with peril and self-discovery. You will have to provide them with the guidance their fatherless home lives are without. These problems, or as some would call them, "puzzles," aren't too difficult for an expert, but are certainly entertaining.

In addition to the main quest at hand, there are a number of "arcade" games that are not required to "play," but instead serve as the sort of instant gratification that Beavis and Butt-head crave. These include "Hock-A-Loogie," "Bug Justice," "Court Chaos," and "Air Guitar." Three complete music videos are also available for your entertainment, one each from GWAR, Sausage, and Primus, three bands steeped in repressed juvenilia.

In conclusion, one can only surmise that **Virtual Stupidity** isn't the last we'll see of these walking existentialists. They will be able to grow before our virtual eyes, until they achieve nirvana or finally go on a date (with a woman). Until then, **Virtual Stupidity** can perhaps best be described as kicking ass or, in true Beavis and Butt-head fashion, not sucking. ♦

Steve Bauman



Beavis & Butt-head confront authoritarian figures at each turn, all designed to keep them oppressed



Beavis as the great Cornholio... looking for some t.p. for his bunghole



Even the fantasy of videogames cannot help Beavis & Butt-head – the man (in the form of money needed to play) still keeps them down

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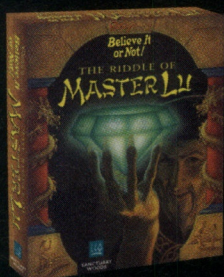
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Total Distortion

Designed by Pop Rocket
Published by Electronic Arts
Platform Windows, Macintosh

Ouch! I think my brain just fell out. Let me stuff it back in - there, that's better.

The old gray matter just ain't what it used to be since it became *Totally Distorted*. At first it was just a blown circuit or two, then a kind of melting sensation, and now it falls out on a regular basis. Why? Well, let's just chalk it up to sensory overload.

Technically, Pop Rocket's **Total Distortion** is an adventure game, but nothing follows the rules in this wildly imaginative, funny, and very loud musical insane asylum. What's more, **Total Distortion** is actually a good Windows game, and that in itself makes it somewhat unusual.

The story picks up in the year 1998, when man has suddenly become capable of not only interplanetary travel, but inter-dimensional jaunts as well. In his explorations, he has discovered that alien civilizations resemble our own, particularly in the way they revere the purveyors of popular culture. Musical entertainers in particular have been found to have taken on god-like status on places other than earth.

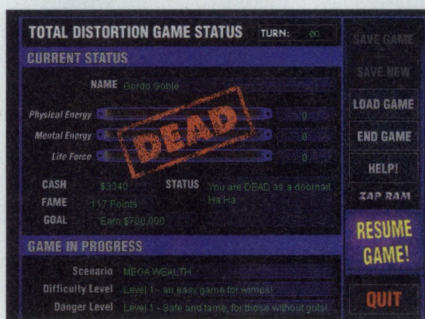
The gamer is a traveler of time and space, a dimensionaut if you will, and for reasons that soon become apparent, it is his sole purpose to create the ultimate music video. Unfortunately, all the good material on our planet has been used up by the MTV generation, so he has journeyed very far, to the "Distortion Dimension". Here he has arrived with his "personal media tower" to capture images and audio that will set his video apart.

Your on-screen persona will tire with time, and maybe get a little hungry or thirsty, so he'll have to deal with those things as well as the strange and often hostile world that awaits outside the tower. Most importantly, he'll have to learn how to work the most excellent **Total Distortion** editing suite, piecing together audio with visual images for that music video masterwork that is the key to his very survival. Then he'll have to try and peddle it via interstellar telephone to interested buyers back on earth, and - you can trust me on this one - these buyers know a good video from a bad one.

That's the basic plot and structure, but it tells little of the complete **Distortion** experience. What was that Jack Nicholson line from the first Batman movie - something about "those great toys" - well, The Joker ain't seen nuthin'. This is a pop culture fantasy, starting with audio bits and bytes seemingly sampled themselves from another dimension. Virtually everything has its own sound effect, and when wacko noises aren't popping from the speakers, really wild heavy metal meets grunge meets funk music is. I personally was not aware of Kent Carmical, the man



This game will rock your world

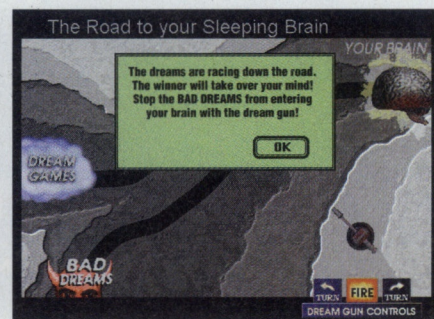


He died on the wimp level?

in charge of **Total Distortion**'s musical treats, but this guy really knows how to slap together mean guitar riffs with lightning fast fingering.

Before one ventures outside, there's no shortage of stuff to check out within the tower; a good percentage of it hides clues to a successful quest. Most memorable is the aquarium/radio on the third floor. Yes, it's got fish (and real life video of dancers and musicians if you hit the right keys), but this is one place where you'll want to pay attention to the radio ads, namely because they're sarcastic triumphs of good humor, and also because their words of wisdom may assist you later. The Tom Vu real estate parody really had me cracking up.

Then there's the library, stocked with useful information, puzzle books (jigsaws, sliders, and the indescribable) and just straight out



All I wanna do is dream ...

well-written lunacy. Just around the corner is the bedroom, where fatigued gamers will be fighting off bad dreams and trying to scoop good ones while sleeping.

Once outside, Guitar Warriors will battle you in do-or-die contests of sonic might (here, playing certain chord structures on your guitar will really bolster the old morale), flying skulls may seal your **Doom**, and musically adept humanoids will either assist or hinder. There's a fair chunk of intricacy here and one can "die" quite easily, so be prepared to take notes and save your current game on a regular basis.

When a game tells you succinctly that "You suck at this," and plays the "You Are Dead" celebratory song when you do die, it's just gotta be good. **Total Distortion** is. ♦

Gordon Goble

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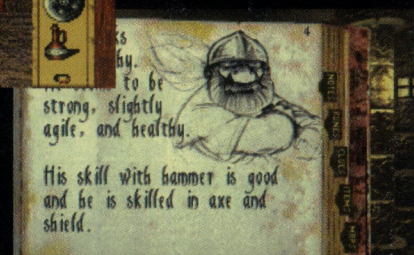
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Mission Critical

Designed by Mike Verdu
Published by Legend Entertainment
Platform DOS

Legend Entertainment's latest graphic adventure, **Mission Critical**, features a theme implying that technological progress cannot be stopped, that eventually machine intelligences will evolve, smarter, faster, and unencumbered by human qualities. They will have consciousness without the baggage of love, guilt, families or other human structures and emotions.

The player starts the game alone in the badly damaged USS Lexington, and doesn't meet these machine intelligences until near the end of the game. Much of the initial gameplay revolves around the task of repairing the ship to complete its mission: the investigation of an alien high-tech installation on Persephone, 68 light years from earth.

The story unfolds as you search the 120 locations on the nine-decked space battle cruiser. Numerous problems needing resolution are discovered in journals, post-it notes, memos and videos dispersed throughout the ship.

The problems are technological in focus: what kind of equipment is needed to repair the hull? How can you re-route the coolant in a damaged nuclear reactor? Most of them are quite thought-provoking, and draw upon real-world knowledge as the basis for their understanding.

Because the ship is so large, with so many areas to explore, getting it back in shape will take some time. It would be a good idea — despite the game's handy design — to take notes as you make progress, since you'll find more problems to resolve before you find the solutions to ones already presented, a fact which gives **Mission Critical** a good, non-linear feel both in story and play.

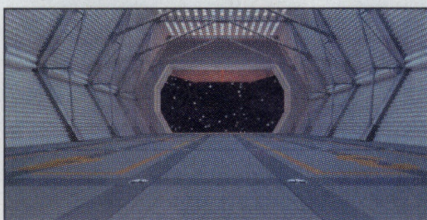
Legend has always been a writer's company. The quality of the writing has never slackened, but slowly, game by game, Legend has been simplifying the text parser commands. **Mission Critical** still has you putting sentences together here and there, but you no longer have to look at long lists of possible choices. Most of the gameplay is substantially object-oriented, even when you're working with the more traditional narrative elements.



You'll need some spare parts and a space suit to repair this



An individual quarters after the hull has been patched



The cargo bay with its door to space open



This wreckage needs a path cut through it

The mechanics of playing **Mission Critical** are thus quite easy to learn; just point and click. For those who are intimidated by using a mouse or playing an adventure game for the first time, there is also an on-line tutorial. An automap keeps you focused on where you are in the game as well.

The good news is that **Mission Critical** is entirely SVGA. The bad news is that most of the game takes place in the Lexington corridors, and they are all monotonously alike: gray and boring. Still, there are several animated cut scenes as the player climbs ladders and crosses walkways and repairs items.

Eric Heberling, composer for **Death Gate** and **Under a Killing Moon**, has composed a ninety minute suspenseful

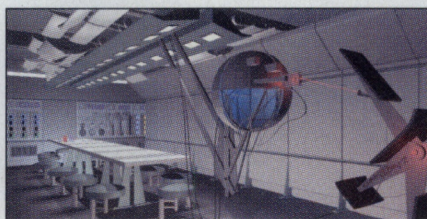
soundtrack, which helps sustain various moods and particularly the sense of imminent danger. The sound is either non-obtrusive or highly appreciated, especially since there is no one to talk to for the longest time.

Although **Mission Critical** offers a full motion video introduction and some video clips are seen during game play, the balance is heavily weighted towards interactive game play. The video clips are used to enhance game play not substitute for it.

The actors in the clips are excellent, unique for the medium. Michael Dorn does as good an acting job in this game as he did as Worf in *Star Trek: the Next Generation*. The others are equally professional, and include such talents as Patricia Charbonneau, Henry Strozier, Susannah Falcon and Jeff Mandon.

Technically, **Mission Critical** is better than **Death Gate**, Legend's previous hit release; however, I enjoyed **Death Gate** more. **Mission Critical** lacks the variety of scenery and humor of earlier Legend titles. Still, it's an outstanding and suspenseful adventure game, and I recommend it to science fiction fans who like their fiction mixed with plenty of hard science. ♦

Andy Backer



The mess hall. There's a spare part you need from here

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Anvil of Dawn

Designed by Dreamforge
Published by New World Computing, Inc.
Platform DOS



The Outdoors overhead map, revealing the top-left quarter of AoD's gameworld. Four immense dungeons are present in this quadrant alone!



This Blood Spawn is thirsting for more!

Computer role-playing games are special kinds of beasts, and are favored by a special kind of audience, one that's not currently the top priority of the computer entertainment industry. CRPGs require time, patience, and a particular kind of fascination with the minutiae of character development, level mapping and inventory, all of which can – ideally – contribute to a slowly cumulative experience richer than anything else out there in computer gaming.

It's not clear whether or not *New World Computing* and *Dreamforge's* semi-traditional CRPG, *Anvil of Dawn*, is meant for such an audience or not. Certainly much effort has gone into simplifying many of the aspects of CRPG design some segments of the audience have found too much of a chore to enjoy. For instance, the very numerically-based approach to character development, spell and weapons abilities which have haunted the genre since its inception have all but disappeared in *AoD*. With a few clicks the player can access this information, but it's mostly cleverly disguised by more graphically-oriented representations of current stats and capabilities. It's quite possible to dig into *AoD* and play it all the way through without ever worrying about a THACO or equivalent.

Certainly much effort has gone as well into providing beautiful illustrations and animations for such things as creatures, spells, traps, puzzles and characters. The artists at *Dreamforge* remain unique in the industry for the quality of their visual representations of fantasy creatures, and the influence of *New World's* own style of CRPG graphic design is felt here as well; animations are in general much larger on-screen than has been typical of all but *New World's* own prior *Might & Magic* CRPG series, and graphic representations of the character's own mood and well-being – one of the most amusing and eye-catching features of *M&M* in its last few installments – are effectively worked out in a small but important window at the top right

of the main game-screen.

Along with all that, *Anvil of Dawn* is a truly epic CRPG, showing up at a time when the audience for same has grown almost exhausted with the wait for something more than the typical arcade-style wonders churned out in response to the over-marketing of the whole *DOOM/Underworld* concept of real-time 3D "role-playing." You're not going to complete *Anvil of Dawn* any time soon, unless both your social and work life are seriously limited in scope and demand. Don't brag about finishing *AoD* in two weeks; it'll mean you have no friends, don't eat, bathe or communicate with other people on the phone, and are either a dropout or unemployed. Normal folks will be playing this thing easily for a couple of months at the minimum.

But aye, there's the rub: do you have the patience to hack your way through a truly endless sea of monsters? Do you have the cool, calm collectedness it takes to fight your way through fifteen dastardly traps, only to find you've failed to collect enough boulders along the way to hold down that pressure plate to open the door to the next room along the corridor? Do you have the forethought to count how many seconds it takes that repeating fireball to pass down the hallway, so you can time your slipping past it to get into the hall with that healing spell you so desperately need? Do you have the fortitude to spend hours completing a level, only to find that upon making an entry in your automap, the program apparently has decided that your inventory's taken up just a *little* too much memory, so it's time to start doing some weird lockup-style things (granted, this happened to me under Win95 with an incredibly full inventory, but ideally it shouldn't have happened at all; save often when you find yourself reaching capacity, either in inventory or on the automap)? And most importantly, are you willing to deal with all of the above in a design which has a real-time

feel to it? This is definitely *not* a contemplative CRPG – you're under quite a bit of pressure when in combat to keep those spells and blows raining down on your opponent (fortunately, the computer-run character pauses its combat while your spell is busy formulating).

If so, you'll find a neat, well-acted and paced story in *Anvil of Dawn* in between the hacking sessions (a primitive but functional conversation-tree system provides the story element throughout the game);

you'll find an excellent but somewhat cluttered and traditional CRPG interface; you'll find an inventory system that's probably the best *Dreamforge* has ever done (despite its organic messiness, rivaling *Origin's* recent *Ultimas* in this area); and you'll find an excellent, if potentially touchy automap system which will either print out directly or save to disk for later printing. You'll find an "auto-journal" which keeps you on track for your current main tasks.

And you'll find a single-character CRPG in *Anvil of Dawn* which – if you've played any of *Dreamforge's* earlier work (*Veil of Darkness*, *Ravenloft*, *Dungeon Hack*, *Menzoberranzan*) – is pretty familiar gaming. Yes, this is a culmination in many ways of the kinds of things *Dreamforge* has excelled at these many years; but it's also lots more of the same. For me, at least, just a little too much time is spent doing exactly the same thing I've been doing with *Dreamforge* games since their earliest incarnations, despite the fact that all the basic elements have grown leaps and bounds in sophistication.

Anvil of Dawn is a truly careful, traditional CRPG design – if you find a very tough nut to crack, you'll get a definite pay-off almost every time for having solved same, something few games can claim these days – and one with immense depth. But its endlessly repetitive gameplay – and its recapitulation of a style of play already done to death in the genre – will prove a definite turn-off for those wanting something more various and dynamic. And its simplification of the more arcane elements of traditional CRPG play will prove insufficient for those still waiting for a truly in-depth, statistically detailed CRPG.

That's *Anvil of Dawn's* main problem: there are both faster and deeper games already on the market or shortly on the way. You can't stick to the middle and expect to gain back an audience which has definitely split at this point. Too bad, really. ♦

Steve Wartofsky

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"THE GRAPHICS ARE AMAZING... FANS WILL BE IN JOY STICK HEAVEN."

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"THE HIVE IS WHAT REBEL ASSAULT SHOULD HAVE BEEN... AGGRESSIVELY ORIGINAL... GROUND BREAKING..."

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THE 11TH HOUR

{the five stages.}

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5 Death.



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*The 3-D graphics will whiten
your hair, not your teeth.*



*Relax, and let us draw you
a nice hot bloodbath.*



*"Gee Wally, Mrs. Cleaver
isn't so nice anymore."*



*Nineteen puzzles kill precious
time, as well as brain cells.*

You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour: The sequel to The

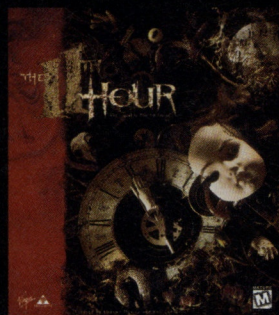
7th Guest™, has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses

incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges with a

full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and 2

CDs longer than its predecessor. So, is The 11th Hour really

worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.



It's finally arrived.

The Riddle of Master Lu

Believe it or not, this the most difficult adventure game in ages... some ex-infocommie is smiling somewhere

Man, is this a hard game, or what? I'd be willing to bet money that you'll need help at some point – most likely in Danzig. So here goes nothing...

The game starts with a dramatic event – Feng Li is bound to a chair, facing a cobra. You could off the cobra with the sword, but that would be cruel. What's that on the floor? After saving Feng Li, and a near eternal bit of discourse, walk back into your office and open your safe (now where do people tend to hide a safe...). Take the letter inside and read it. After you've nodded off after another epic bit of back-story, talk to Feng Li before heading off. Now it's off to the local Posh Express for a trip to Peiping (though to save yourself a trip later in the game, you can try to take Feng Li's turtle and the treats in the drawer).

Peiping

The first thing you'll want to do in each foreign country is purchase some of the local currency and have a chat with the local Posh dude. Now you have to get into the Hall of Classics. If you take a look at the alley next to the entrance you'll get a hint how you can get in without a pass. Go behind the blacksmith's shop. If you take the wheel, it'll fall apart. Take the spokes, which will be your ticket to scaling the wall. However, that pesky peasant will follow you around and report you. He seems to like metal objects, so perhaps you can distract him.

Distraction comes in the form of the woman feeding the birds. Notice that she has a World War I helmet. You have a WWI



Get it on, bang a gong



It's Wolf ... bribery works wonders with this vain gardener

photo, so trade it with her for the helmet. If you hang the helmet on something out of his reach, it may be enough to allow you to scale the wall. Once you've done this, use the spikes in the wall. What was that you heard?

Once over, you'll find an object on the ground that was dislodged. Grab it and remember to mail it back to the Odditorium (you'll do this with a number of objects along the way). Walk over to the acolyte and summon the priest by ringing the gong. Talk to the priest (be sure to compliment the library without comparing it). He'll tell you more about your upcoming journey. Now it's off to Danzig.

Danzig

What joker was the architect of this place? [groan] You can either talk to Wolf now or later (he's the gardener). If you offer him some marks, he'll show you the Baron's tomb. Now enter the building and talk to the young Baron. After another of those epic conversations, you'll find out what you need to do – find a secret room, locate a gem, etc.

After everyone leaves this room, look at the sofa and you'll see something in it. More Odditorium fodder: Go to the billiard room. Here's the start of one of the nastiest parts of the game. Take the billiard ball from the table. Open the writing desk and take the keys and letter. Open the letter and read it (note the stamp – more for the Odditorium). Unlock the games cabinet with the key and open the drawer. Look at the deck of cards and you'll notice that one of the cards is missing (an ace of spades, naturally). This is an extremely vague hint and solution, but if you look closely at the wall, you'll see an ace of spades embedded in the wall. If you open it, a switch will appear, which opens the

Baron's smoking hutch.

Open the cigar box and take a cigar. Open the vent and you'll see a couple of slots. Place the billiard ball in the round slot, activating some machinery. Press the black button and leave the hutch view. The billiard table is now at an angle and can be lifted, revealing a secret passage. Walk on down...

Now for the most evil puzzle in the whole game. If you can do this one on your own, congratulations. You are a superb adventurer. In front of you is some ungodly apparatus that only exists in adventure games. Inside is the Romanov Emerald. Rather than give you hints, I'll tell you what you need to do to solve it. But I recommend you sit there and look at the puzzle for a while and try to figure out on your own how the various pieces connect to one another. One thing to keep in mind is that a couple of the pieces will be used more than once.

Open the drawer and take the hose, grips, plug, and tube. Put the grips on the pump rod and the tube on the nozzles. Take the faucet handle from the faucet and put it on the air valve of the compression tank, closing the valve. Take the lever key from the wall and put it on the table pivot. Take the periodic table from the wall and put it in the jar. Pump the pump, open the valve, and you have the emerald. Take the periodic table. No problem, right?

Now how do we get out of here? The metal door looks like a good starting point, but it won't budge. It is, however, connected to the cabinet. Take the lever key, pump rod, and drips. Put the key on the rod and then place this combined item on the ceiling bracket. Pull on the key. Voila, almost. Separate the cork from the emerald pin. Look at the emerald. Stick the emerald into

the clamp hole of the jar, releasing it. Take the jar and put the cork and rubber plug into two of its three holes. Put the grips in the third hole and now you have a watertight jar (why?). Put the jar into the lever key suspended from the ceiling.

Take the faucet pipe and put it in the glass jar, connecting the hose to the pipe. Take the tube from the nozzle and connect it to the hose. Use the tube and put it on the faucet stem. Take the faucet handle and put it back on the faucet stem. Turn on the water, which weighs down the lever and holds the cabinet open. No problem, right?

Now you find a microscope and a letter. Read the letter, which provides you your next destination and some more hints about Master Lu. Remember the pin? Look at it with the microscope. It reads Ti and Xe, which has two meanings. Hmm, remember science class back in high school? It's elemental, my dear, and I'm sure you be able to find the eXiT with these clues, since they give you the combination to the safe.

Finally, you're out! And done with the most difficult part of the game. But you're not quite done here in Danzig. Wander off to the graveyard and ask Wolf about that odd bell. Pay up and you'll find the truth of the matter. Since there must be something cool in that tomb, you'll need to ring the bell. Pull the step ladder on the stairs and climb up them. Check out the insides of the tomb. You'll need Feng Li's turtle and treats in New York (unless you got it earlier), so it's back to New York (this is an annoyance – how long, in those days, would it take to travel this great a distance?). If you do go back, drop off the oddities you've collected.

Back in Danzig, the step ladder has van-

ished. Wolf doesn't have it, but he does have a plank and some garden tools. My, isn't he a hard worker? If you mess up his shrubs, he'll probably go insane. Or at least he'll leave this location. Why not find out?

Once Wolf is gone, take the plank (whoa, Ripley, is that a plank in your pocket or are you pining for Mei Chin?) and the edger and go off to the tomb. Placing the plank on the urns, climb up there, open the grate, place the turtle treats inside the tomb, and let your super turtle go at 'em. When he gets to them, he'll hit the rope that holds the bell, causing it to ring. Wolf opens the tomb and freaks out. Open the tomb and take the key to Master Lu's tomb.

Don't forget to send Feng Li his turtle back before heading off to Peru.

Peru

Take a look at that stele in the corner of the Posh. And what's up with all of the puffs? And that clock? Remember them for later, but chat with Mr. Posh about them. Go to scenic Mocha Mocha.

Cross the tree over the chasm and talk to Emilio Menendez. Buy the head from him (for the Odditorium) for 450 inti and give him the emerald for the shovel and ladder. Take the toy near the pile after Emilio croaks and go off to the east. Sketch the stele and go up the stairs. Take a look at the niche above the skeleton. Looks like something Ripley might need.

At the top of terrace, take a green and brown vine. You'll need to descend from the top of the building to the niche, but these vines aren't strong enough. Where



Ripley pines for Mei Chin

did you see some vines and rope? Ah, the tree bridge...

Tie the two vines together and return to the bridge. This is a weird puzzle, because it didn't seem to work quite right for me, but I eventually made it through. What you need to do here is substitute vines for the rope, but you need extra vines in order to equal the strength of the rope. You need the rope in the end. What you do is tie the vines in your inventory to the spider on the east. Throw the vines across the chasm. Cross over. Tie the vines to the tree. Take the brown vine to each side as well (crossing over when needed). Finally take the rope (to help you here, look before you take – there are green and brown vines as well as a rope).

Once across, take everything you left off in order to cross the chasm and head back to the roof of the building on the terrace. Tie the rope to the ladder and put it on the ground. Put the altar on the ladder and climb down, taking the crystal skull. Climb back up and take the ladder and rope.

Enter the observatory to the west of the building. Check out your journal to find out the combination to the door. Once inside you'll find a headless figure. You have a skull. Wonder what you do here? There are some holes in the capstan and a chain that circles the room. Insert the shovel in the hole and push on it, rotating the room until light hits the glyphs on the wall. Ripley sketches out their color relationships and gets ready to leave. Don't forget to grab the skull and send it, along with the shrunk-en head and toy, to New York. Now it's off to Easter Island. ♦

Steve Bauman



Hope Ripley didn't drink much mocha here at Mocha Mocha



The old altar on the ladder trick

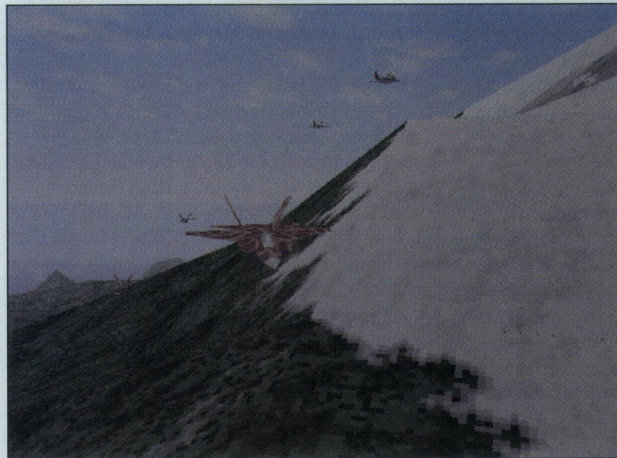
The Hangar



The boys have me landing on a 1200-foot strip this month, so let's cut to the chase: **Jetfighter III** first off, then a few comments on **EF2000** and **Su-27**.

The latest full Crunch-oriented demo *Mission Studios* had me drop by to witness was another eye-opener. The first evidence something interesting was going on with this thing was when I got control of the F-22 and started flying through the non-combat scenery... and kept flying... and kept flying... and kept flying. Meanwhile, one of the team was busy over in the other room checking out the map of South America they had on the wall to see if he could pinpoint where I was. He could. I could. The relationship between the in-game graphics and the map data was close enough that something like that could happen.

More importantly, though, *Mission Studios* has done something no-one else busy texture-mapping has achieved yet: they've created realistic, 3-D texture-mapped terrain that both works smoothly (it ran fine on a P60 in 320x200 mode and looked good in that mode, too! Something few SVGA-oriented texture-mapped sims these days can claim) and looks various. No flying around a small grapefruit — you've got a good chunk of South America to work with here. Even better, few repeating patterns. That's a real-looking mountain, not just another in a repeated series of Frosty's Sno Cones showing up across the horizon. I can't tell you how annoying it is to fly across a series of texture-mapped mountains, all repeating the same ice pattern down the side, again, and again, and again... not here. **Jetfighter III** is the works right now for realistic, texture-mapped terrain. I'm pleased, and I think you will be, too.



The real test, of course, is to have that kind of graphics detail and get the air full of planes and missiles and explosions, in an attempt to bring a system to its knees. More good news — little if any slow-down with the sky full of action.

I have to say, when I saw **EF2000** a few short months ago in demo it looked like it would blow **Jetfighter III** away on the graphics front. **EF2000** is out now, and it's amazingly good — I can get smooth, 640x480 animation in the full-screen HUD mode on a P90, no mean feat, and this with lots going on — but at this point (and it's still months from completion as I write this), **Jetfighter III** looks like it's going to blow **EF2000** away instead. Oh, did I mention? No warping as you get up close and personal with the terrain — neither **EF2000** nor even **Flight Unlimited** can say that. The "texel" (name for texture-block used by scenery design guys) size for **Jetfighter III**'s terrain is signifi-

cantly smaller than that for **EF2000**, which means it not only looks better up close but looks more 3-D from some distance up — you have a much clearer sense of visually ascending above terrain scaling down in size below you as you climb.

Bob Dinnerman's also been doing some interesting work with the shading and lighting effects for the sim — the company turned on and off one of the most interesting and subtle effects during the demo, having to do with the way snow is lighted when the sun's at a certain angle — and it made a huge difference in the dimensionality of the scene represented. It's clear that *Mission Studios* is going the distance technologically with this one, and should have ample cutting-edge interest for those checking out the photo-realistic real-time 3D approach to air combat simulation these days.

So **Jetfighter III**'s going to be one of the hottest-looking sims coming up, and should also work well on a wide variety of machines. We spent a long morning and afternoon with the thing so I got to see a lot; the interface/ encyclopedia components are full-featured, the adventure/situation story you're in (with scripted missions, by the way) is fully realized — I didn't get much demonstration of instruments systems. Oh well.

That's where **EF2000** shines in my book right now, that along with the dynamic battle generator: it's really the first sim since **F-117A** from *MicroProse* (remember that ancient piece of work?) that does the full suite of electronic warfare and instruments control effectively. You feel like you're in a next-century cockpit in **EF2000**, and it's a whole different kind of game from the more pure scoot 'n shoot approach to air combat simulation we've seen recently.

And at the other end of the spectrum, — relief!! Yes. **Su-27** is the best air combat sim out right now. Fast to get into, tough to win at, quite realistic flight and combat modeling, easy to edit and incredibly detailed where it counts. It's great to keep playing a particular mission over and over again, with a simple <CTRL-F> needed to restart once you've reached the end. No fifty interface screens and video to plow through. Thank you, *SSI*. Guys, five hours with **Su-27** and you'll know whether you're a flight sim purist or not — and what that means. If you're not — enjoy **I 1th Hour**. Crunch out. ♦

Steve Wartofsky

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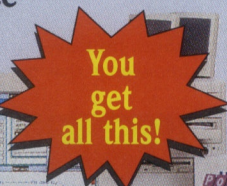
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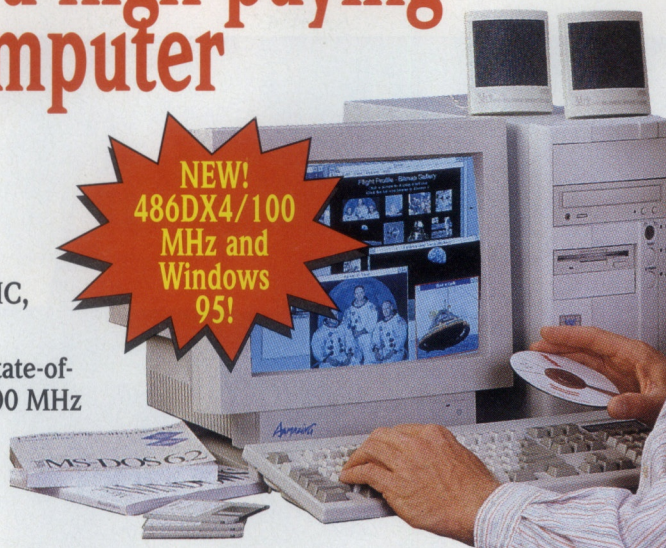
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Air Combat Advisor - Maneuver stage basics



This is a classic WWII Angle fighter (Zero) vs. the Energy fighter (P-40) scenario. Because the Zero has no appreciable armor, it is advisable to avoid the direct head-on. To reduce the possibilities of getting shot in the pass, only allow difficult high angle deflection shots. Bide your time and make your turn immediately after the pass. Use your superior turning ability to get on the tail of the P-40 as he tries to run away.

The Maneuver Stage of air combat generally takes place after the Attack Stage. While it is definitely preferable to get kills in the Attack Stage and avoid the Maneuver Stage all together, any air combat sim that allows you to kill too many opponents in the Attack stage will not hold your attention for long. Let's face it, the bulk of the fun of air combat is found in the Maneuver Stage. The harder the kill, the more satisfying it is, right?

Offense or defense

Before we go any further, let's get this straight. The goal of air combat is to kill your target. In order to do this you need to be on the offensive. Maneuvering is used to either maintain

your offensive, or convert a neutral or defensive position into an offensive one. BFM's (Basic Flight Maneuvers) by themselves are neither offensive or defensive. Your relative position in relation to the bandit is what characterizes your posture. T2H positioning is defensive, H2T is offensive, H2H is both offensive and defensive, and T2T is neutral. Also note that with modern weapons, there is a second defensive position and that is if you're being shot at. Make no mistake about it: if someone fires a missile at you, you are defensive.

Attack - maneuver or maneuver - attack

When speaking about maneuvering, it is important to acknowledge that the Attack

Stage does not need to precede the Maneuver Stage. When we first spoke about Attack Stage basics a couple of months ago, we discussed why you should never break off an attack after you've initiated it. Avoiding a head-on attack is a strategy that may seem to go against that recommendation, but it really doesn't. Let me explain, using a head-on attack as an example.

Going toe to toe

Avoiding the head-on and breaking off an attack are two different things. Avoiding the head-on is only temporary. The goals behind avoiding the head-on is two fold. One is to give your opponent the hardest shot possible at you; the other is to jump ahead to the next stage of air combat (the Maneuver Stage) to try and move to an offensive position. Let's talk about how to do this.

Surviving the head-on

The most difficult shot in air combat is a high angle of deflection shot. This means showing the side of your airplane to your opponent at the highest rate of relative speed. In practice, it means going full throttle and placing your opponent on your 10- or 2 o'clock position. A slight dive or slight climb in addition to the above will further complicate things for your opponent. The key to getting a quick kill or staying alive after the pass is to time your next turn correctly in addition to turning in the right direction. We'll cover each separately, but first let's talk about the factors you have to consider before you can make these decisions.

Know thy aircraft

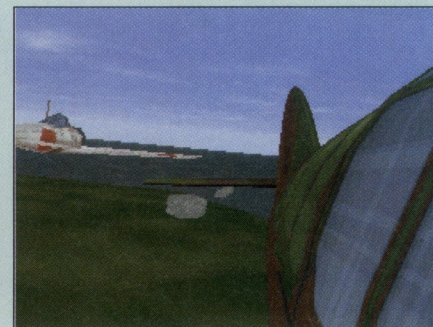
Although Dirty Harry wasn't a fighter pilot, his quote "a man's got to know his limitations" kind of fits an important rule of air combat. While I don't want to sound like some Zen guru (although "Ben Chiu - The Sun-Tzu of Air War" sounds intriguing), you really must "become one with your aircraft." Know your abilities as well as the capabilities of your aircraft (while you're at it, it doesn't hurt to know the capabilities of your opponents aircraft, either). Unfortunately, the only



Maneuvering is used to either maintain your offensive, or convert a neutral or defensive position into an offensive one. Make too many wrong decisions and you could end up in this situation



With modern weapons, there is a second defensive position and that is if you're being shot at. Make no mistake about it. If someone fires a missile at you, you are defensive. Incoming!



That was close! After the head-on pass is where the Maneuvering Stage usually begins. However, it should be noted that the Attack Stage does not need to precede the Maneuver Stage

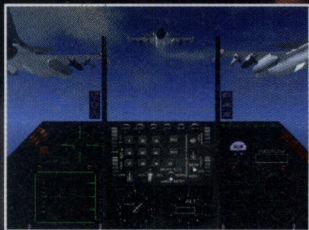
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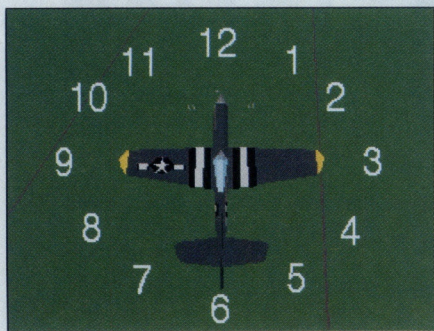


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The military convention is to name relative positions to numbers on a clock (12 o'clock being directly ahead, 6 o'clock being directly behind, etc.)

way to learn this stuff is to figure it out yourself, read up on it, and/or talk to someone who already has. Armed with this information, you can decide on a basic strategy. Fortunately, since air combat sims mimic real life, much of the basic fighter strategy for most fighters is readily available in the form of fighter doctrine from previous and present wars.

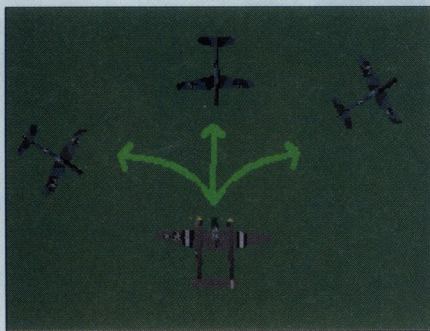
Fight like this

Fighter doctrine can be boiled down to being based on two basic flight performance characteristics. In the past, most fighters were either faster, or more maneuverable than their opponents (of course there are "super fighters" that come down the pike now and then, but the opposition usually comes up with a counter, very quickly leveling out the battle field. Nowadays, most modern fighters are *both* fast *and* maneuverable; the performance advantages over any opponent have been narrowing). Generally, if your airplane is more maneuverable than your opponent, there is an advantage to trying to lure him into a turning fight. Conversely, if your aircraft isn't as maneuverable as your opponent, you want to avoid the turning fight because you'd be at a disadvantage.

There is a lot more to discuss along these lines; however, since we're discussing basics right now and we have a lot more to cover, let's just leave this off with some general thoughts for now: if your maneuverability is the same or better than your opponent, you want to turn as soon as possible after a pass so you can shoot at him again before he can shoot at you. If your maneuverability is less than your opponent's, but speed is greater, you'll want to make your turns as far away from your opponent as possible so you can make the turn before getting shot at.

Angle vs. Energy

These two styles of fighting are commonly referred to as Angle fighting and Energy fighting. Angle fighting (*aka* dogfighting) is the style that favors better maneuverability (and frequently becomes a stall fight – we'll go into details at a later date), and Energy fighting is



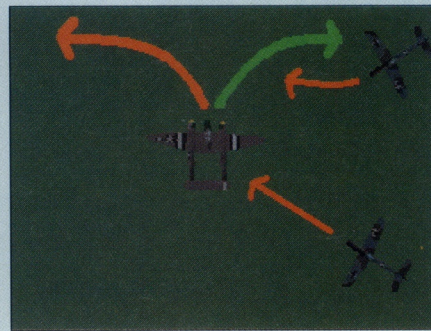
The most preferable relative enemy aircraft position for you is ahead of the 9 to 3 o'clock line regardless of posture. It will change or maintain any posture into a more favorable purely offensive or offensive/defensive one

the style that relies on superior airspeed. While there are no hard and fast rules that apply for every situation, and since surprise (doing something unexpected, such as initiating an Angle fight in a classic Energy fight situation) can be a valuable tactic (which sometimes borderlines on suicidal), you should remember one thing. Without going into any details about energy and energy management, if you don't know the relative performance of your opponent, or have trouble identifying the exact model of the opposing aircraft, and you're not flying one of the slowest airplanes around, consider attempting an Energy fight before trying the Angle fight. This is simply because once you've bled off any energy in a turn, it is very difficult to re-gain it while bandits are trying to shoot you out of the sky. If you're ever going to attempt an Energy fight, it is best to do it when you have the most of it. Since turning or climbing (they're almost exactly the same relative to the airplane) will cost you energy, this means executing the Energy fight before making any turns.

Which way to turn

Okay, so you've decided when to turn. Which way? Since air combat takes place in a three dimensional environment, which way you can turn includes up or down in addition to left or right. Your aircraft performance will dictate your best options. Unless your fighter has a vastly superior rate of climb *and* your opponent isn't equipped with missiles (such as the classic **Falcon 3.0** F-16 vs. MiG 19 scenario), or you're a real hot shot with or without an aircraft with superior maneuverability, you'll want to avoid the radical vertical stuff for offensive maneuvers at this stage. This basically leaves the left or right hand combat turn (maximum rate, minimum radius turns). We'll discuss the nuts and bolts of good turning technique some other time. Let's get the basic strategy down now.

Which way you should turn depends on the relative position of the bandit and your airspeed in regards to your present minimum turn radius. The easiest factor to recognize is the relative position of the bandit. Using the



If you're purely defensive, regardless of the bandit's relative spatial position, always turn toward the bandit unless you're jinking or avoiding the head-on (just giving him a lower angle of deflection shot at yourself)



The MiG-19 in Falcon 3.0 can out turn the F-16. However, the F-16 has a superior climb performance advantage over the MiG. After the initial pass, the F-16 counters the MiG-19's hard left turn attempt to get on the Falcon's tail with a steep climb. Unless you have a vastly superior rate of climb over your opponent, you'll generally want to avoid radical vertical maneuvers

military convention of naming relative positions to numbers on a clock (12 o'clock being directly ahead, 6 o'clock being directly behind, etc.), the most preferable relative enemy aircraft position for you is ahead of the 9 thru 3 o'clock line, regardless of posture. When faced with this situation, always turn toward the bandit. While this will usually result in some sort of relative head-on pass, it accomplishes two things. First, it points the nose of your aircraft in the general direction of the enemy, which increases your ability to shoot at him (making you offensive), and secondly, it decreases the ability for a T2H shot at you. The only exception to this rule is if you need to avoid the head-on pass.

If you're purely defensive, regardless of the bandit's relative spatial position, always turn toward the bandit unless you're jinking or avoiding the head-on. This goes with out exception, because if you turn away, you are just giving him a lower angle of deflection shot at yourself. Not good!

We'll discuss more next time since we're out of space this month. Until then, if you're going to turn, the safest bet is to turn toward the enemy. Just don't forget to shoot at him!

Ben Chiu



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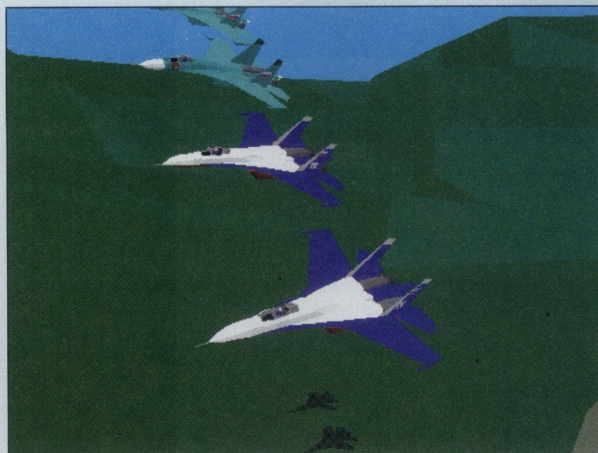
Su-27 Flanker

Designed by SSI
Published by Mindscape
Platform Windows 95

Anyone seriously involved with air combat and flight simulation these days has to know two important things: first, paying a lot of attention to multi-player in an essentially stand-alone design is a waste of time and resource, and detracts from the main focus of such a product. Second, trying to produce a substantially accurate real-time air-ground/air-sea/air-air battle generator's still a little ways off (**EF2000** is the latest, best effort in this direction). The main point to remember is that there are ongoing efforts focused on multi-player (**Air Warrior** remains the standard right now) which will remain well ahead of what any solo or two-player multi-player option in an air combat sim can accomplish, both in terms of multi-player interaction and in the campaign system.

Given the above fact, it comes as no surprise then that SSI's **Su-27** departs from the usual efforts to try to be all things to all people, and focuses instead on one area of stand-alone air combat simulation that's been neglected for too long: accuracy and detail of flight, weapons and instrument realism. **Su-27** sacrifices all the bells and whistles most of the rest of the industry's been shooting for and – even more than its nearest competitor, *Interactive Magic's Apache* – gives the player an excellent flight and air combat simulation with astonishing levels of realism in those areas most important to fans of the genre.

A quick, unstudied glance at **Su-27** might leave the player wondering, for instance, where all the heavy texture-mapping everyone else is doing has gone. Closer attention reveals, however, that the actual number of surfaces present in **Su-27** – for the planes and ground objects in particular – in any particular frame of animation is really much greater than it is in those designs that upon first glance look more detailed. Why does this



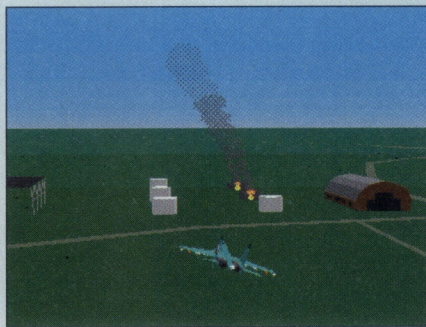
Four planes, wing to wing, all flying smoothly. Beautiful!

matter? First, because it provides much greater realism in terms of those 3D elements whose 3D qualities are important for what the player is actually engaged in while in flight and air combat. Only those things important to the engagements at hand get intensive design. Second, because it frees up resources to do other things, like provide more accurate flight and weapons models, more detailed in-cockpit instrument performance, more impressive missile object animation (complete with transparencies in the trails), etc. The usual trade-offs which are always made in a sim are in this case made with precision of thought and focus – time spent with **Su-27** will make that amply clear.

Some other interesting details which those knowledgeable about the genre will understand the importance of: 1) Check out the way the Flanker performs at low speeds. Try climbing out too early, for instance, on take-off. Now this is complex modeling! 2) Note that your cannon won't just shoot when you pull the trigger. Your missiles won't release unless you're within a set of functional firing solution parameters. Frustrating for the arcade game crowd, sure, but for those interested in learning a set of skills, again – impressive. 3) Check out the effects of altitude, temperature and wind on flight performance.



The SVGA cockpit, complete with characters in Cyrillic and fully-functional detailed instruments. Impressive!



The simulation gives you only the detail you need to gain a perfect firing solution



You'll see all selected weapons on the plane, each one with a separate launch and impact animation. Amazing!

How many modern air combat sims are out there which give you the chance to do a full crosswind landing? Only **Apache** comes close. 4) You think there aren't enough included missions? Try a few of 'em out, with everything set to challengingly realistic. You're not going to be finishing any of them soon unless you spend some time really learning the plane, the weapons systems, the kinds of flight profiles appropriate for different kinds of missions, and the effective use of a wingman. As it should be. The full set of "General" (i.e. your role is that of a General for the theatre of operations, something not made fully clear in the manual) missions rivals any campaign out there, dynamic or static. 5) Follow launch of just one weapon – from you or at you – in the outside view. Keep an eye on the numbers on the bar at the bottom. Amazing! And finally, sit back and run any of the Demo missions included (you can step in at any time and take over, an excellent real-time training system, by the way). If you can do anywhere near as well replicating the performance presented in any of those missions, you've spent quite a bit of time as either a real or simulating air combat pilot! They're beautiful to watch, and even more exciting to emulate.

The only disappointment with **Su-27** is the manual (at least there is one! Both online and in paper...). It's as if some demon lurks over SSI and keeps it under the spell "Mystify Player with Incomplete Documentation." Like almost everything the company has ever released, from **Stellar Crusade** onward, the included documentation only begins to give the player some sense of how to get on top of the software. Fundamental things like weapons control are left unclear. Too much time is spent going over the basics of air combat – yet again – instead of the basics of this simulation. Oh well. Par for the SSI course.

As a simulation, though **Su-27** is without qualification now the most realistic modern-day air combat simulation on the market. Anyone curious about what that means should rush out and pick up a copy. I did. ♦

Steve Wartofsky

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Fighter Duel

Designed by Jaeger Software
Published by Philips Interactive
Platform DOS

It is 1995, and a former World War II English Spitfire pilot flies a new World War II dogfight simulator called **Fighter Duel** by Jaeger Software and Philips Interactive. He does not even enter combat, because he is too mesmerized by flying the different aircraft! I agree. In my opinion, as a pilot who has flown the TF51D Mustang and Spitfire in real life aerobatics, **Fighter Duel** has the most accurate feel on the market.

Fighter Duel is a first person stand alone and modem play PC World War II SVGA dogfighting simulator. It runs liquid smoothly (except very close to the ground) in gorgeous SVGA on its designated minimum machine (a 486/33). It models seven World War II fighters and variants, equaling 13 total, including the Mustang, Corsair, Spitfire, Zero and German fighters. Finally, Battle of Britain airplanes are modeled after a long six year wait.

Of any planes I have personally flown, "heavy iron" (World War II warbirds) have a unique, heavy, slow motion, soaring feeling in vertical maneuvers combined with solid, sensitive controls in the horizontal plane. Nothing yet accurately touches this feel except **Fighter Duel**.

It has a "full force" flight model with torque, inertia, stability differences, correctly-modeled 90 degree oscillating spins (a first), negative g engine cut out (another first), stall buffeting, etc. It flies in a non-bouncy manner, like real warbirds. The handling differences between the aircraft are more visible in this product than in any other flight simulator. In short, it is well done.

A large, photo-realistic fully working World War II instrument panel dominates the atmosphere in front of you (a first). It quivers when you fire your superb-sounding guns, has engine instrument needles, and others, that correctly jump and bounce, a working needle and ball, the first truly correct WW2 artificial horizon, and a unique engine sound which envelopes you in "heavy iron" atmosphere. Actually, in **Fighter Duel**, everything works to envelop you in



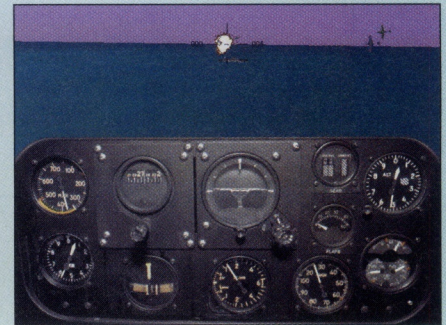
This is one hurting Corsair

"heavy iron" atmosphere. The viewing system is very close to the keypad system used in **Kesmai Air Warrior**.

The stand-alone options are reminiscent of **Chuck Yeager's Air Combat** (without the missions), to let you explore the capabilities of your historic mounts. You can choose to fight up to eight different computer opponents from eight different starting scenarios. Getting catapulted from a carrier, and combat air patrol, are some examples. You can choose altitudes, fuel levels, cloud options and the level of artificial intelligence. On the highest setting, the computer opponents are good enough to get away from even good players occasionally. An arcade mode ("quick flight") is easy to get into with a quick click of a button, and is loads of fun.

The modem play works well and without problems when I play other people by modem. I notice no problems with speed, warping or hookups. Sequential screens lead you logically from one option to another as you set up your computer and prepare to duel. You need at least a 9600 baud modem to play modem. Different start options allow user setup choices or random starting positions....what a blast! Let us look at some possible player concerns.

Fighter Duel contains only one Mustang instrument panel without framing or gunsight (a gunsight reticle exists, however). Is this bothersome? Frankly, it is not. In real

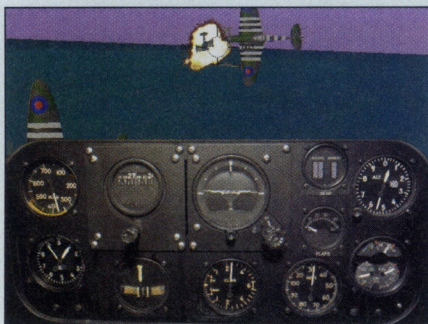


Love those fireworks

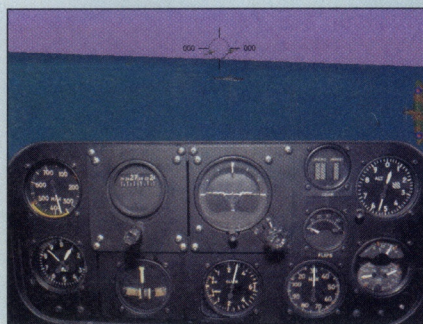
life flying, I find that I focus on a point out ahead of the cockpit (except for instrument flying) and blank out what ever is between me and that focus point, including even a person's head. However, some players might be bothered by this. The sole instrument panel is so realistic that having only one is not so bad (though more in the future would be appreciated). Distance of enemy fighters is, however, hard to judge. The addition of set missions, careers and controllable wingmen would add more playability. The ground graphics are limited, with only sea and islands, and slow up when you get near the ground. Flight simulator grognards will notice that fighters do not get slow in roll at high speeds, as they should. The addition of snap rolls would be nice as well. These two features would mean that you could use more effective evasion tactics, as in real life. Dive deceleration and drag need increasing. The Spitfire should be more jerky in pitch and rudders. Correct low speed handling characteristics are virtually ignored as well.

Do these problems kill **Fighter Duel**? Hardly. It is just too exciting as it stands. It's the perfect modem game, in many ways - little overhead and great action. Besides, Jaeger promises to fix problems with patches. Simply put, if you want feel or modem play, **Fighter Duel** will interest you. ♦

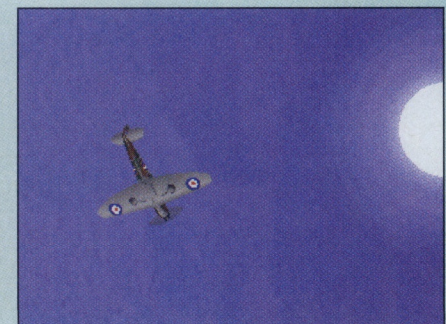
Richard Ordway



Uh oh, the Spitfires are gunning for you now

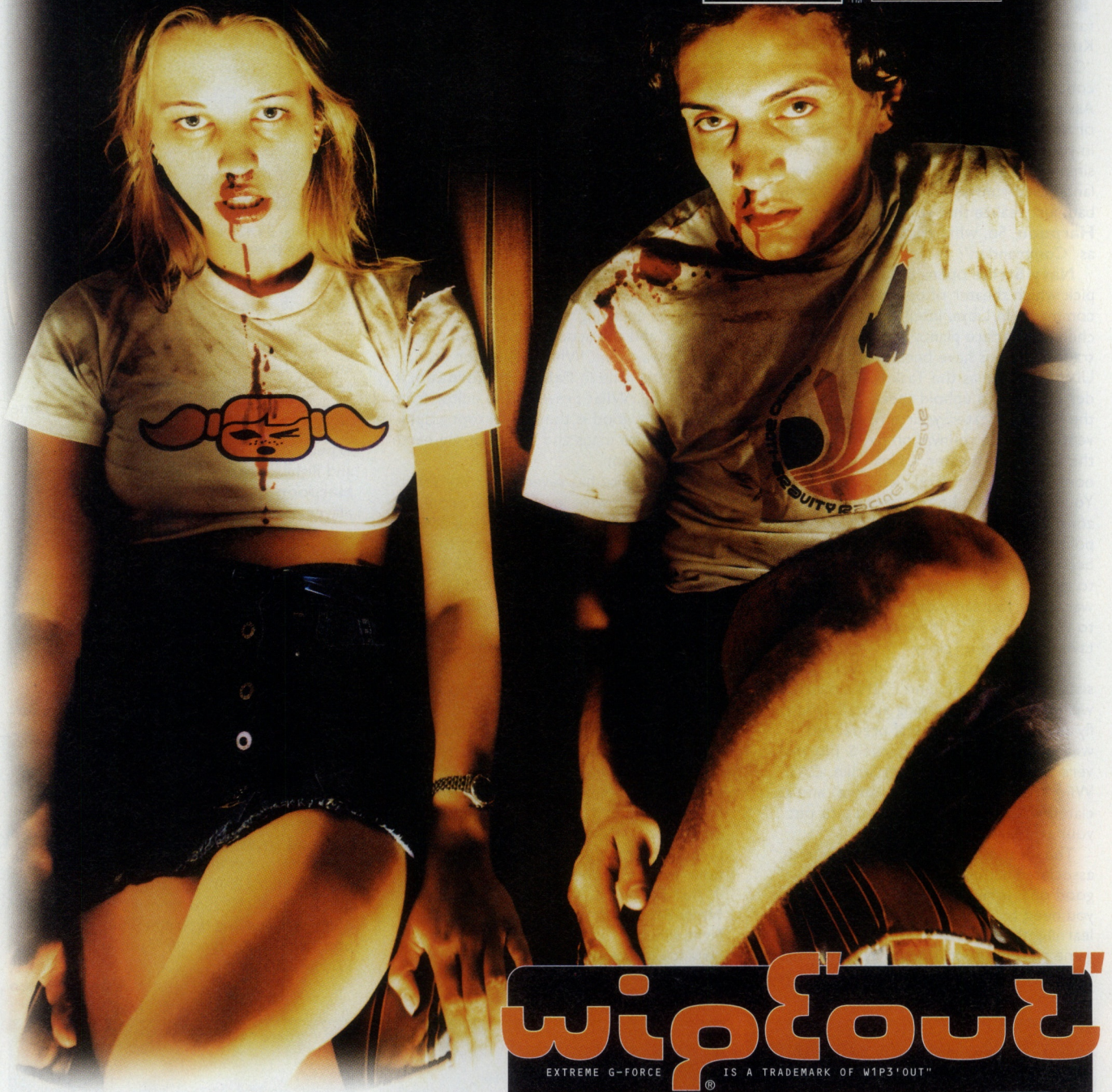


Spitfire Mk I



Spitfire I hiding in the sun

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Navy Strike

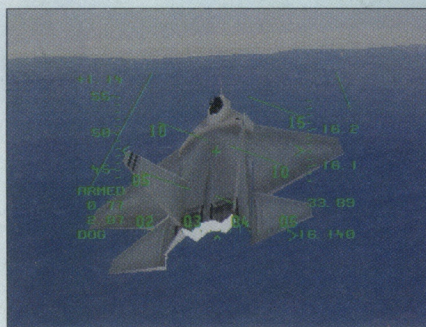
Designed by Steve Goss, Richard Bakewell, Andy McCann, Mark Shaw
Published by Empire Interactive
Platform DOS

Navy Strike places you in the role of "Commander"/pilot of a Task Force in charge of one of three rapidly changing political situations: Libya, Kuwait and the China Sea. I use the term "Commander" loosely, for while you can control almost every aspect of Flight Assignment, you cannot control the course or defensive/offensive weapons of the ships in your command. Thus, the ships are there simply as background. They might as well be land-based runways. This isn't necessarily bad, just realize that you aren't buying a **Harpoon**. So, what exactly do you control as "Commander"?

Navy Strike opens up by allowing you to pick which theater of operations you are to command. In Libya, intelligence reports that chemical warfare plants are in operation so trade sanctions have been imposed by the UN. Your role as the Task Force Commander (TFC) is to uphold these sanctions. For the Kuwait theater, your mission is to prevent a possible re-invasion by Iraq. Finally, in the China Sea theater, China has imposed a no-fly zone over the oil-rich Spratly Islands. Your mission will be to oppose that no-fly zone. All of these missions start out as politically tense situations. War has not been declared; your main mission is to try to carry out your orders without starting a war. How you carry out your orders is up to you as the TFC. It's your show; you will take the blame or glory.

The arsenal you have to do your job consists of F/A-18E, AX and F22N aircraft, as well as E2C early warning aircraft (you can't fly this one). Using several predefined weapon loadouts (Long-Range & Normal versions of CAP, Strike, Sea Strike, CAS, Wild Weasel and Reconnaissance) and associated waypoint templates, you plot out your strategy.

The ideal of a waypoint template with associated actions for each waypoint is a good one. It reduces the amount of work you need to do, gives the novice a way of learning the game system and the advanced game player a good starting point for modifications. **Navy Strike** provides a good way-

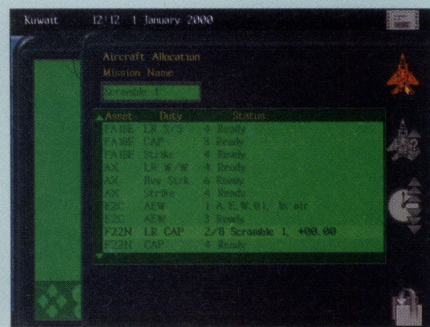


External view of an FN22

point editor for fine-tuning your approach. You can add, delete, and modify waypoints as well as adjusting the altitude aircraft are flown at and the action to be accomplished at each waypoint. While the editor isn't as good as the one in **Falcon** or **Tornado**, it is powerful. What prevents the editor from being really good is the lack of topographically accurate maps and a "nap-of-the-earth" waypoint action.

Navy Strike has several difficulty settings. At the lowest level the AI is non-existent. It is almost impossible to lose at this setting, making it ideal for learning the game interface. At the highest setting the game can be challenging at the command level. There is a lot happening, and you don't have the resources to do everything that needs to be done. Do you escort that civilian Airbus, or send out another reconnaissance flight? Should I refit my aircraft payloads to provide more CAP or Strike aircraft? A multitude of decisions such as these await you. However, as in most games of this type (e.g. **SVGA Harrier**), you must also fly the strike or engagement portion of the flight for any hope of a positive outcome. In my experience, at the highest level of difficulty, unless I flew the intercept and strike aircraft, none ever returned.

And herein lies the major problem with **Navy Strike**: it's neither a good enough flight simulator to stand on its own (for instance, there is no way to communicate with your wingman other than taking com-



Allocating 2 FN22 aircraft to intercept an incoming threat

rol of his plane) nor is it a good enough command-type strategy game to win high markings in that category. The manuals included with the game don't help much, either. They are inadequate in instructing you how to fly and fight, or how to plan naval strategy. You can't really play this game like **Harpoon** or **Fleet Defender** and expect to win. However, without the tactical and flight knowledge gained from playing **Harpoon** and **Fleet Defender** a novice player is going to have a rough time figuring out **Naval Strike**.

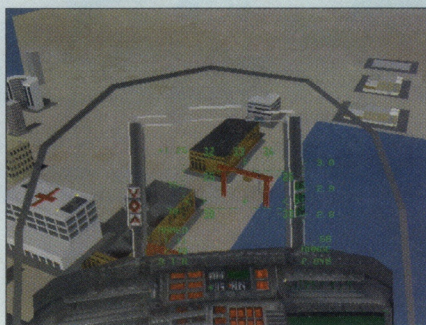
Despite the mixed results of trying to mix the genres here, **Navy Strike** is nevertheless a pretty enjoyable experience if you are a veteran simulation and strategy gamer. Otherwise, it's a mixed blessing at best.

*Problem Note: Please be aware that I was unable to get **Navy Strike** to work with my Zeos Pantera P90 system with 16 Mb of RAM and a Diamond Stealth 64 Video (2 Mb of VRAM) card running Windows 95. Even after booting to MS-DOS mode and installing the game for VGA, I was unable to get the game running. Whether this has something to do with my video card, the Zeos Pantera or the Diamond Stealth Card, I don't know. However, I was able to run the game on a 486/DX66 with 12 Mb of RAM and a Diamond Stealth 64 (1 Mb VRAM) card running DOS 6.22. Make sure you buy the game from a store that accepts returns, especially if you are running Windows 95.*

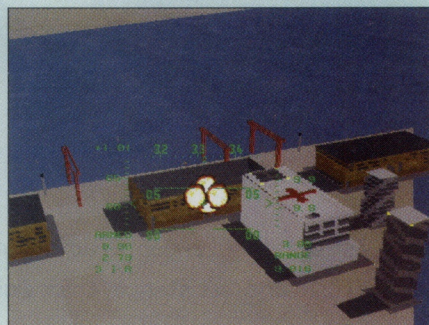
Alan C. Fusco



Getting ready to jump into the pilot seat of "Scramble-1"



Coming in for a precision airstrike - bombing that hospital to the left isn't going to win us any propaganda points!



Bull's-Eye! Nice work

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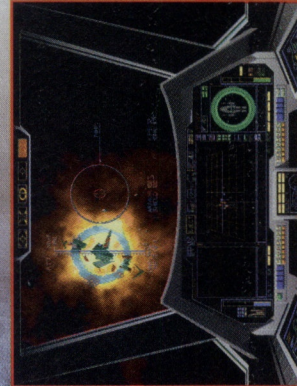
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Star Rangers

Designed and published by Interactive Magic
Platform DOS



The obligatory explosion shot

Star Rangers is Interactive Magic's first design done totally in house. As such, it hints at lots of great future gaming from this up and comer. **Star Rangers** is a solidly fun design, though not without some flaws.

The premise is based loosely on Atari's classic **Star Raiders**. In that game (itself based on any of a number of TTY-based "STRTRK" programs from the dim gray days of computing) you hopped around an area of space marked off neatly into a grid of sectors. In each sector you'd fight whatever bad guys there were, or dock with a space station for repairs and refitting. The catch was, as you were fighting the enemies in one sector their comrades would be closing in on your bases in other sectors. This helped keep the action frantic from start to finish.

Same thing here, only *I-Magic* has improved a classic. There are no distinct sectors in this game. Instead, the star map shows the exact location of other vessels. Bases and friendly ships always show up on this map, but enemies only appear if they're in sensor range. Each friendly base or ship can scan an area of space around itself, and they beam that data to your ship's computer. If an area of space isn't being scanned, its contents are a complete mystery to you. Could be an entire enemy fleet out there...waiting.

You have a weapon to fight this problem, though. You can fly into unknown space and drop a transponder buoy. This little beauty will scan nearby space and add its data to all the rest. In this way, you could scan all of known space...if you had the time. But while



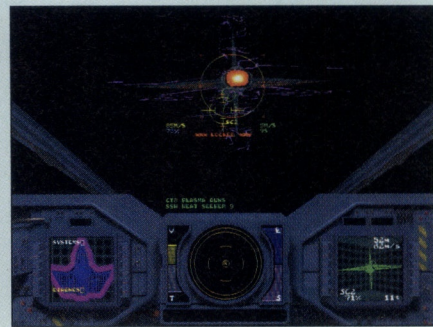
Hot on the tail of a Taureg pirate!

you're running transponder errands, the enemy is closing in!

You and a wingman will have to beat back the enemy fleets. By popping up the star map and clicking on a point, you set your warp destination. You can then either warp there yourself, or send your wingie to handle the dirty work. If you decide to go, you'll find that warp-space looks like a winding wire-frame tunnel. You'll have to fly the length of it in order to arrive at your intended destination. If you wander out of the tunnel, you'll land in normal space at a distance from your targeted re-entry point.

Once in contact with the enemies, **Star Rangers** turns into a good ol' space shoot-em-up. There are little glimmers of **X-Wing** in there (specifically channeling energy to and from shields and weapons) but for the most part it doesn't have as much of a "sim" feeling as **X-Wing** did. You have a variety of guns and missiles to use against your foes, and of course a state of the art targeting computer. One nice feature is that destroyed ships leave real debris floating in space. Fly into a hunk of this junk and your ship goes careening out of control!

After you've wasted the bad guys, it's time to check your status. If you're low on energy or ammo, or if you've taken damage, you might need to head to a base for refitting and repair. If you have time. But it may be that across the galaxy, a civilian ship is under attack and needs your help. If so, you're faced with the decision of where your priorities lie. To hesitate is to lose. Think fast, and get back into the fight!



The bogey's shields glow with the energy from your plasma bolt

Overall, **Star Rangers** is a fun game, but there are some minor problems. First, the sound. Sound effects are just too wimpy. The sound of guns firing and missiles launching would be more appropriate for a **Mario Brothers** game than something as macho as **Star Rangers**! And the voice acting is weak, to say the least. When your wingman kills an enemy, he radios something like "That one's vapor," in a monotonous voice that would make Ben Stein proud.

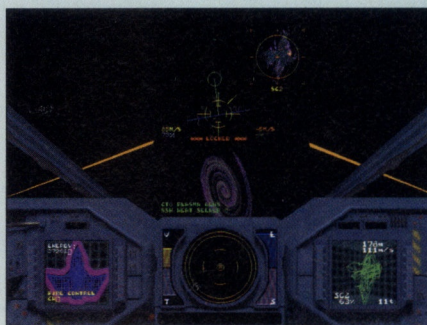
Second, during the game you'll get video and voice messages through a display in your cockpit. Even on a P-100 with 16 megs of RAM, these incoming messages caused the game to freeze while they loaded. Very disconcerting. The video is useless anyway... a patch to just turn it off would be welcome.

These problems are just minor annoyances though. Overall, the gameplay is just what *I-Magic* wanted it to be: a fast and furious arcade game that still requires some thought and planning. Ten difficulty levels take the game from ridiculously easy to a decent challenge, so anyone should be able to enjoy it. Granted, the challenge often comes more from overwhelming numbers of enemies than from them outflanking you, but that again ties into the arcade game feel. Blasting wave after wave of enemy ships is where it's at! **Star Rangers** isn't too serious or very deep, but it is fun. Go ahead. Try it. It'll be your guilty little secret for when you're feeling a bit burned out from the latest hyper-realistic flight-sim. Enjoy! ♦

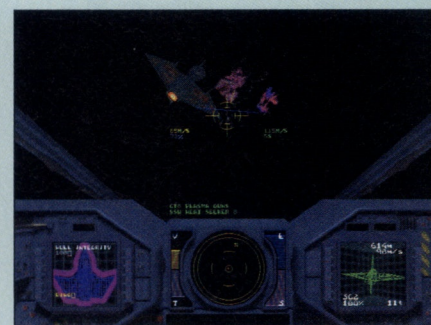
Peter Smith



Incoming bandit at 6 o'clock!



This guy's shields are glowing from the beating I'm giving him



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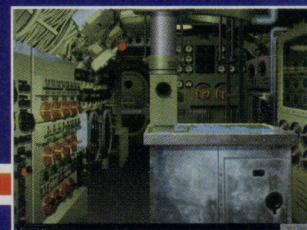
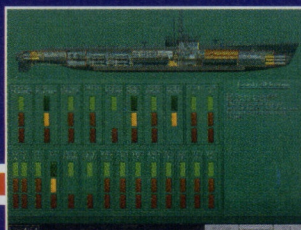
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IBM 256-color SVGA

Tower

Designed & Published by The Bruce Artwick Organization
Platform Windows

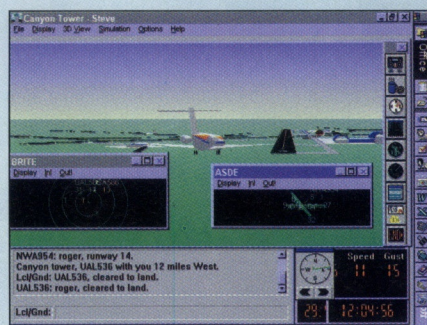
Yes, *The Bruce Artwick Organization's Tower* is a complex simulation, literally years in the making. Yes, it's a scaled-back version of software originally designed to be used for professional air traffic controller training. But what's really amazing about *Tower* is that – for all of its claim to the title of Serious Simulation – the design has two of the most fundamental elements of gaming down pat: it's disarmingly simple and easy to get into, but incredibly challenging to win at. Playing *Tower* feels like playing chess, or monopoly, or – dare I say it – *Tetris* the first time around.

In other words, your first reaction once you get the thing started up is, "so – all I do is just contact these airplanes and clear 'em to land? No prob! Three keystrokes, UAL585 yer set, three keystrokes, okay American668 you just take that other runway, uh, USA223 taxi to runway 4L, er...no, wait, UAL585's landing there, – taxi to 27R, umm... uh oh, wait a second... – where's the pause button?!"

You can, of course set up incredibly challenging scenarios, with heavy air traffic approaching one of three included airports from all directions and all the runways and approaches in use. But *Tower* starts you off simply (in practice mode, if you'd like) with just, say, one or two planes approaching per minute. The initial scenario options ease you into the whole rhythm of air traffic control. You can just sit back and watch the slow ballet in this state, enjoying the incredible animations (bit-mapped for O'Hare and Washington DCA, polygon for the fictional Canyon Field, the latter including zoom and in-the-cockpit modes so you can *really* jump into the simulation from numerous perspectives). And you can then graduate into the increasing tension of having to juggle your traffic as it gets busier.

Tetris is really a useful comparison, in one sense, because the rhythm of the gameplay is quite similar in the two designs. The essential principles of play are intuitive enough in both cases that you can spend a little unpressured time at the start learning them, then use the software's ability to provide ever-increasing challenges and put your basic skills to use in a faster and faster-paced environment, one which requires you to think ever more quickly on your feet.

It's partly the design, but also partly the nature of the reality being simulated that leads to this kind of gradually intensifying style of play. The initial commands to issue to your approaching traffic are straightforward enough, but as traffic starts to pile up, you have to start using an increasing variety of commands to put the whole real-time puzzle together and keep everything running smoothly. As you play *Tower*, a kind of three-dimensional conceptualization of the relationships between all the planes in the air



Keeping an eye on NWA flight 954 from both the air traffic controller's and the bird's eye view perspectives at Canyon Field (polygon)

and on the ground grows apace, and requires ever-more-concentrated attention to sustain intact. That ongoing conceptualization of the relationships between incoming and outgoing traffic is what makes *Tower* both exciting to play and almost infinite in its variety.

Air traffic control simulations have been here before, *Tracon* and *Tracon II* being the most notable efforts. A computer screen is the perfect medium to represent the air traffic controller's BRITE and ASDE screens on, after all – a perfect marriage of the medium with the message. The big difference in *Tower* is that it's got an incredibly beautiful combination of out-the-window (of the tower) views, too. With the bit-mapped airports, you can scroll 360 degrees around the tower and either manually track the traffic, or select auto-tracking and have the computer switch to tracking whichever aircraft you right-click on on the ASDE or BRITE. With the polygon airport, you also have the additional options of jumping to "super binocular" up-close outside views of each incoming airplane, or even into the airplane's own cockpit itself. Feel the pain of a missed approach from a first-person perspective; experience the aggravation of finding a Cessna 182 readying for take-off on your assigned runway. Then jump back into the



Keeping in close touch with your traffic is ideal – and easy to do when there's not much going on yet. Once things get jumping, though...



O'Hare field in Chicago – one of the world's busiest airports, especially once you dial up the traffic!

tower and sweat the details, knowing that you are responsible for all these planes and the passengers on-board.

The last two really neat things to say about *Tower* is that, first, it integrates wonderfully into a Windows95 environment. I have it running in the background with full confidence even as I write this review, and can switch back and forth between *Tower* and my apps with ease (no special video modes are required, though things start to get a little small at 1280x1024). Secondly, it's got hooks to do modem or direct serial connection with *Flight Simulator*. So you can direct a friend into Canyon Field (the only airport with modem support) in an interesting multiplayer experience, or – if you have a non-standard multi-serial port setup, you could conceivably handle multiple incoming FS-connected traffic, making *Tower* an interesting potential hub for network-style play without the overhead of network hardware and software.

All in all, *Tower* is a surprisingly good simulation for the PC environment, and even more amazingly – a fun and exciting game. Let's hope there's a chance for airports and add-ons with this design down the road! ♦

Steve Wartofsky



You get to see fully-detailed planes making actual take-offs and landings on the bitmapped runways, complete with animated lights and aircraft shadows. Pretty!

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Black Knight

Designed by Steve Eschweiler
Published by FormGen
Platform DOS

Marine Strike Fighter

Black Knight – a new F/A-18 sim from Formgen, named after the famous Navy squadron – is, to put it kindly, a low-end project. The most welcome “feature” of this air combat simulator is that it runs on modest hardware. **BK** actually runs very well with full detail on a 486/80. With the wave of the “bring em’ to their knees” graphics intensive flight sims recently, this is a potential plus, even though **BK** is only VGA. While the graphics are kind of a cross between **Yeager Air Combat**, the **Aces Over Pacific/Europe** series on steroids, with some **Apache** ground traffic details, the overall appearance with Gouraud shading and very good fog effects is still quite pleasing.

What usually makes or breaks many flight simulators is the flight model. While I’ve never flown an actual F/A-18, the representation in **BK** feels pretty good. According to the 80-page manual a few actual Black Knight pilots had a hand in the development of **BK**, so I would suspect that it must be fairly accurate. However, my opinion is the roll axis feels “about right,” but pitch control seems rather insensitive. I base this on the comments of real F/A-18 pilots, who say the Hornet has very good pitch authority even at low speeds. Furthermore, while the brakes decrease airspeed, dropping the gear doesn’t. And flaps do nothing more than add a little drag; they don’t change stall speeds (!). It’s obvious **BK** was scaled down to take the complexity out of flying a modern jet fighter, although the ILS system is one of the more complete ones I’ve seen on flight sims.

BK offers many of the standard things air combat sim fans look for, such as popular flight controller support, quick mission creator (limited to 3 bandits), flight recorder, training missions (8), and canned missions. There is also a free flight option, where you can take your F/A-18 up and



BK is one of the very few recently released flight sims that will run well on modest hardware and still have eye pleasing graphics

bore holes in the sky without having to worry about SAMs or getting a missile up your tailpipe from a bandit.

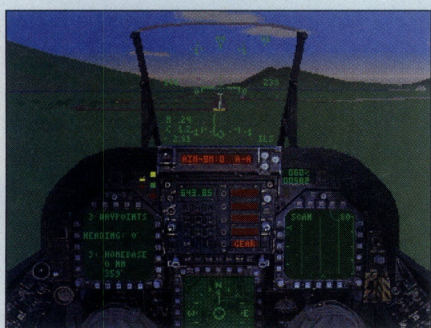
The most interesting feature of **BK** is the flight instructor option. If you have a sound card, in addition to “Bitchin’ Betty” (the female voiced warning system), you can have a flight instructor tell you what to do. While the instructor actually helps you become acquainted with the aircraft, he’ll grate on your nerves after a while. **BK** also supports a relatively subtle 3D sound mode featuring actual recordings of in-flight noise, as a bonus.

Of the 50 included canned missions (10 more are available free for sending in your registration card), most are ground strikes (not unusual for an attack aircraft). There’s no campaign play, and there’s a total lack of mission briefing or debriefing (the Digital Display Indicators indicate your tar-

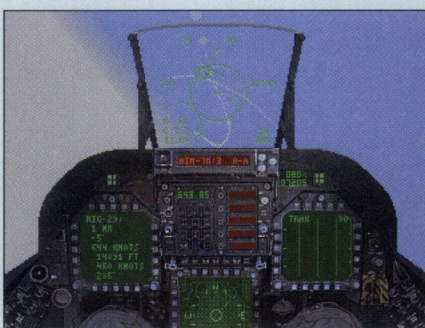
gets). However, there is a novel scoring system. You get points for good hits and landings, weighed against what ordnance you use. The problem is, you can only view your score when you finish a mission. On some missions, you’ll have a wingman, but your interaction with him is pretty much limited to his congratulating you on hitting a target and calling you for help.

With this all said, overall, **BK** has a **Jetfighter 2** feel to it — simple and lightly challenging. While **BK** won’t hold the interest of a hard core air combat sim’er for very long, I believe **BK** would make a good introductory air combat sim or gift (**BK** currently comes with a free *Firepower* video about general Naval aviation — very little about the F/A-18) for the casual air combat buff due to its simplicity and modest enemy AI. ♦

Ben Chiu



The implementation of the ILS system is very good. Most sims will only point you toward the air strip. **BK**’s waypoints set you up realistically for shooting an approach



The F/A-18 is also able to mix it up (dogfight) with the best of them



Scratch another bandit! To its credit, dogfighting in **BK** looks very close to actual gun camera footage

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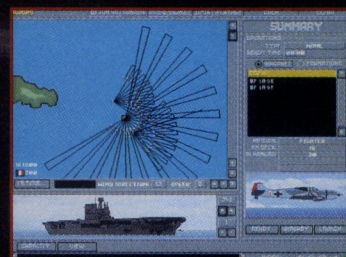
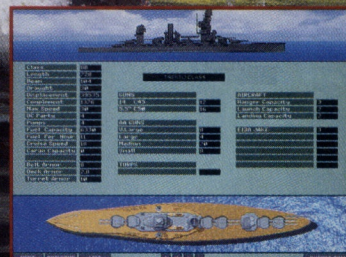
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Wait! Look at this manual! I told you I FLUNKED calculus!

At first glance, the book can be quite intimidating for a wannabe aero engineer. Chapter 2, the designer's guide, runs over 70 pages. There is a tutorial that will slowly lead you by the hand through the design and building of a paper airplane. BAO even added "workshops" that will likewise hone your skills. Don't worry! This program is not so detailed that it is impossible to use, and the instructions are clear and simple. If you are a **FS5.1** aficionado, you're motto is probably "Alone, Unarmed and Unafraid" anyway. Just dive right in and learn by doing.

The very best advice given in the book is to round up the necessary references before you start. It will save you a lot of running around searching for dimensions between building each part. You'll find it easier to learn this program if you try to recreate an existing design rather than invent a new aerospace vehicle.

So decide what you want to build, gather some photos of the aircraft from various

angles, find some drawings or blueprints that include dimension information and secure some basic performance data. If you can't find dimension information, get a good ruler and hope the drawings are to scale! In addition, you need the right "just do it" attitude. The program design functions are based on "tenths." For example, you make a part 2.5 feet long. Most blueprints are going to list dimensions in feet and inches. Don't let the minor details get you down. Round off the foot dimension to something close and press on. Otherwise, you will make it way harder than it needs to be for no noticeable result at the end of the project.

The example used for this project is a Fairchild PT-19. It was one of the "workhorse" trainers of World War II; over 12,000 were built, used mainly in the United States and Canada for primary pilot training. Its flying characteristics are superb for training new pilots. Over 200 are still on the FAA registry, with about 100 of those in flyable condition. Reference material is readily at hand. Many of the original Army manuals are available. The airplane Parts Catalog with its exploded drawings of even the smallest assemblies is a great help. The airplane Structural Repair Manual, Maintenance Manual and the Assembly Manual also provide dimensions, pictures and diagrams. Performance specifications are in the Pilot's Operating Manual. There also happens to be a PT-19 in my hangar; the ultimate reference! It seemed the perfect choice for experimentation with **FSFS**.

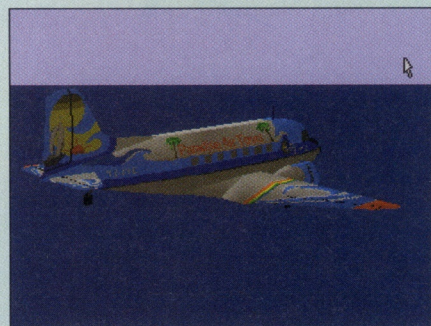
If you are in search of such references, check the "Books" section of Trade-A-Plane. It's published 3 times a month and is available at major newsstands. Manuals are for sale for both military and civilian aircraft within its pages.

Everybody into the pool!

Use the learn by doing approach and turn to page 19, the tutorial on how to design and build a paper airplane. If it works for paper, it should work for a PT or anything else and the result will be much more fun to fly. The step by step approach is perfect; simply follow the directions for creating your project directory and then change to it. Keep right on going and set up the blueprint screen as they suggest. Now, when it is time to draw the actual blueprint for



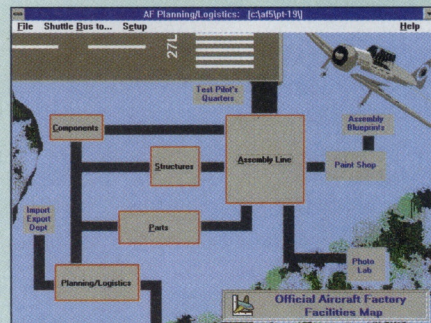
This F-18 is just one of the new aircraft FSFS allows you to fly in Flight Simulator. Its performance is much better than anything offered so far!



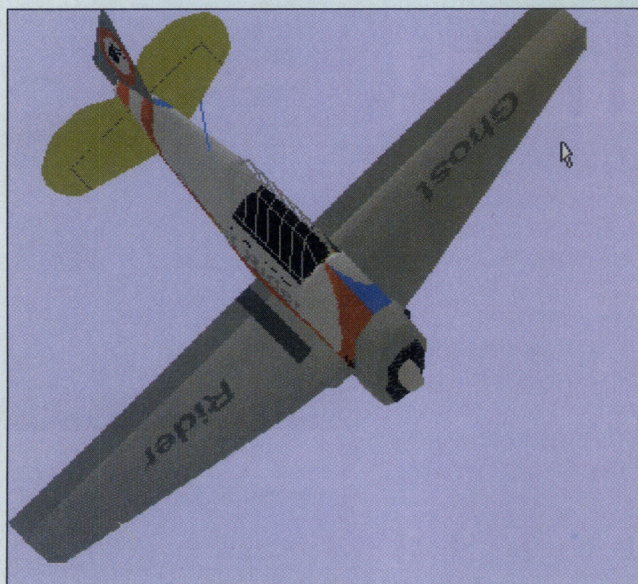
The paint job on the new DC-3 is really colorful and enjoyable. You'll spend most of your time in exterior view when flying it



The Northwest 747 is a blast to fly! In this behemoth, when you're sitting on the numbers waiting to take-off you're looking down on the runway from a perch about 40 feet high



The factory: the interface is easy to understand and simple to use. Jump in and "just do it!"



The new T-6 Texan is just the thing for chasing the computer generated Cessnas around the sky. If only there were guns!

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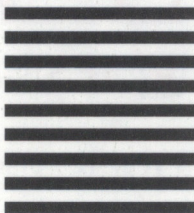
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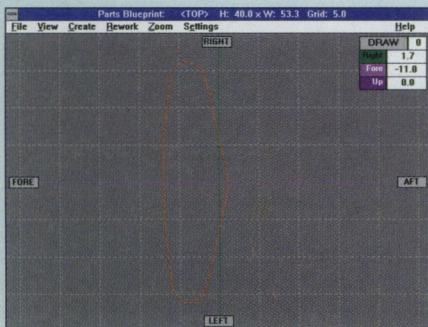
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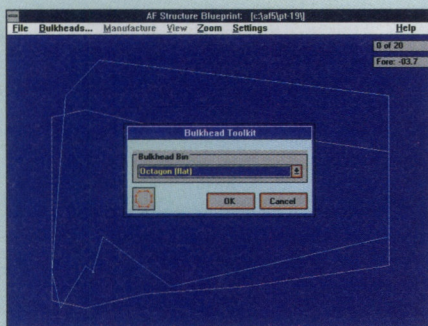


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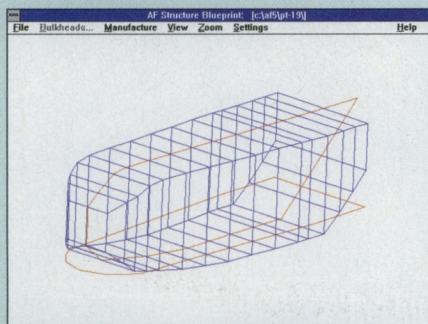
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- and many more!



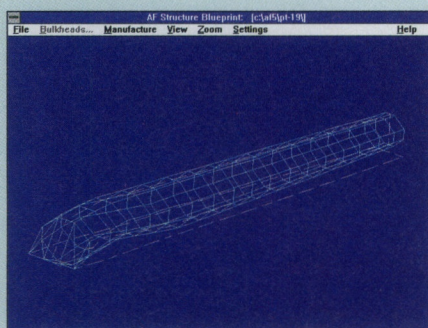
Building the wing. Remember to closely space the points around a wingtip to get a smooth curve



The overlay of the top and side fuselage views looks unlike any aircraft part you ever saw. Have faith, it will work out just fine!



The nose cowl after bulkhead installation and manufacture. Not bad! Told you it works out! You can change colors on the screens to suit your preferences



The fuselage after manufacture. The first part produced; there are a few errors to rework next time but not bad for a first effort. It'll fly

the fuselage there is an important shortcut to the procedure.

Have your proposed blueprint already sketched out on a piece of graph paper. Use your reference materials and plot each point in an outline of the shape you intend to create. This may seem a little unnecessary but it will ultimately save you time. The program plots reference points in a sequential manner.

Unfortunately, it won't allow you to go back and adjust one in the middle of the blueprint without erasing all the points that followed the incorrect one. This is a pain, so make sure you plot them correctly the first time; use your graph. Prepare the side view first. Remember, no one is going to the moon in this thing, so round off the measurements to the nearest 6" (.5 inches in **FSFS** style) and get on with it. You can be precise to the last millimeter in later projects! You won't be able to connect the last point with the first point to close the design, but don't worry about it. The program will take care of that; just put it as close as you can get it.

Next build the top view by drawing it in reference to the side view. Select new part and reference it to your previously saved side view. Line up the parts carefully; switch between side and top views to make sure they join correctly where angles change. Definitely use the "Symmetry Mode" from the "Create" menu as the manual suggests. It allows you to draw one half of the view while the program "mirrors" the other half. It's a great time saver.

One minor characteristic of parts building can be annoying. You are limited to 30 reference point entries when you design a part. On long, mostly straight parts this is not a factor. When you start trying to draw curved surfaces it may limit you, especially if you use the "Symmetry Mode". For example, if you want a wing with nicely curved wingtips you will have to closely space many points as you go around the wingtip to get that smooth look. But in Symmetry, each point is being duplicated on the other side of the axis; in effect, you are limited to 15 points. To get around this problem, either use points sparingly except at the wingtip, or don't use Symmetry. Just build one wing. Later, the Assembly Line will allow you to add a mirror image of the one you actually create to the opposite side of the aircraft.

Bulking up...without Hans and Franz!

After you've built the top and side views of the fuselage and saved them, you can move on

to the step that will make these line drawings begin to resemble an aircraft. Installation of the bulkheads appears difficult when first viewed, but it is one of the easiest procedures. Once you are in Structures, select both of the parts you just built. When the two parts are overlaid they look like totally unrelated pieces! Don't worry. Believe!

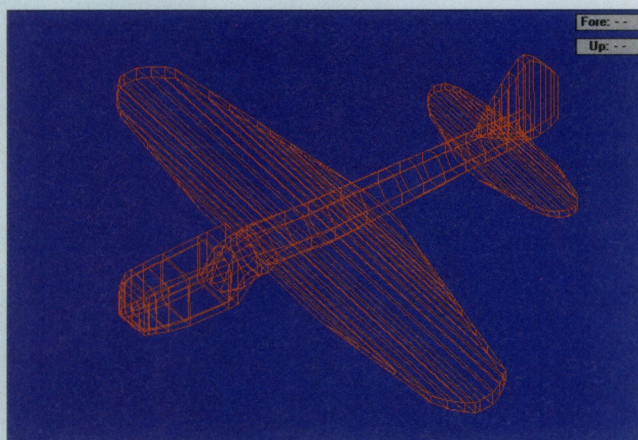
From the Bulkhead Toolbox select the type of bulkhead you want. These shapes will define how the exterior of your aircraft looks. For a PT-19, the Flat Octagon was the closest to the original. Once again, placement proceeds progressively across the screen from one side to the other. If you make an error, you will have to erase all bulkheads back to the bad one to change it. Generally, you will want to place a bulkhead at any point where an angle change occurs in either the side or top view. For long straight stretches, space bulkheads evenly through the structure about a foot apart. As you approach thin areas, such as the trailing edge of a wing, you may not be able to place a bulkhead without causing a lump in the profile. If the area is less than 8 inches thick, it won't need a bulkhead. The Structures screen also has a limitation on the number of bulkheads you can place. The program will not accept more than 20 and will display a message telling you to rework the design.

When you think you have it right, manufacture it and save it as the book suggests.

Assembly line production: Quicker than Henry Ford ever dreamed of!

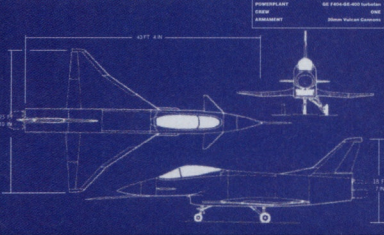
Repeat the previous parts and structure building process until you have all the basic parts necessary for the aircraft. The PT-19 required a Nose Cowl, Fuselage, Wing, Horizontal Stabilizer and Vertical Stabilizer to resemble an aircraft. Follow the same assembly procedure that the manual specifies for the paper airplane and your aircraft will be ready to test fly in no time....and that's a topic for another issue! ♦

John Nolan

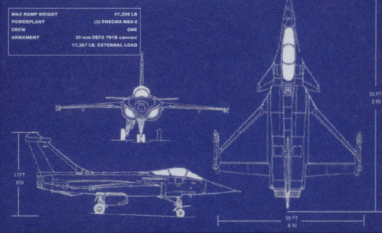


A quickly designed and produced PT-19. Time to get it into the air and then bring the prototype back into the factory for revisions!

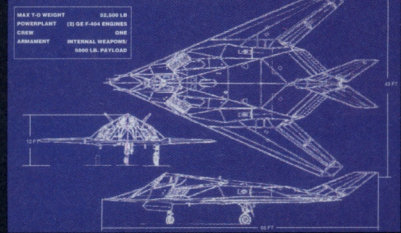
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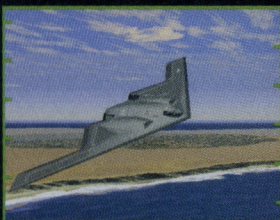
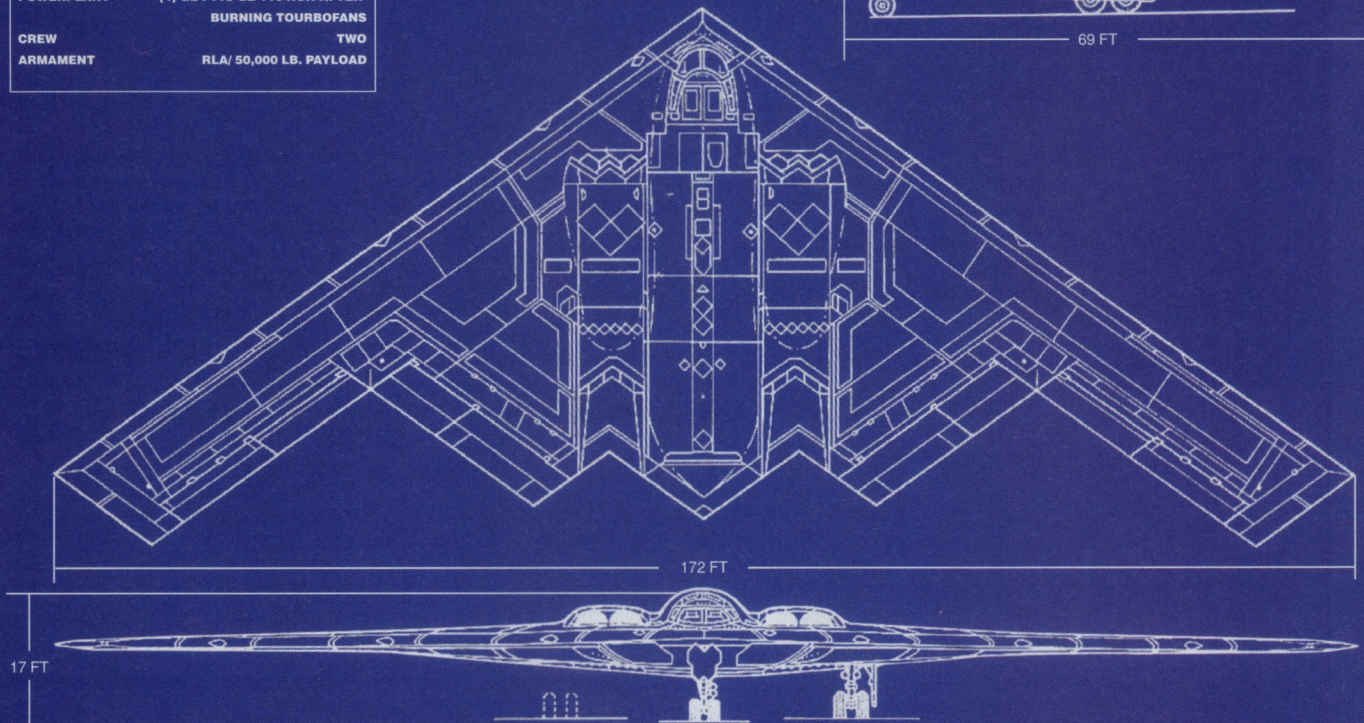
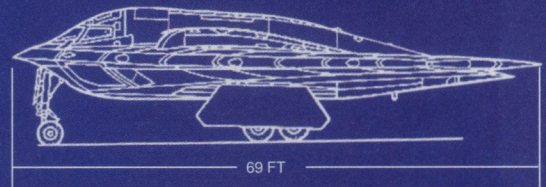
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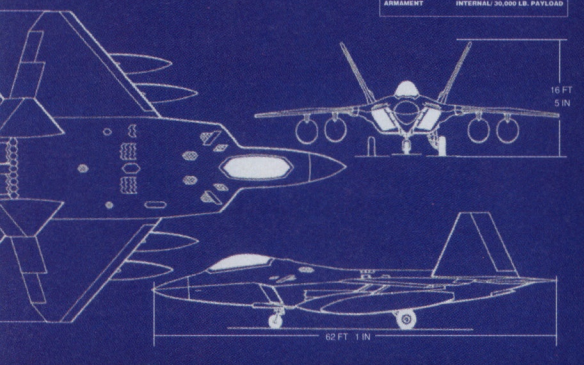
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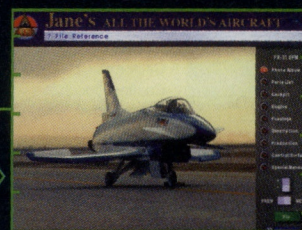


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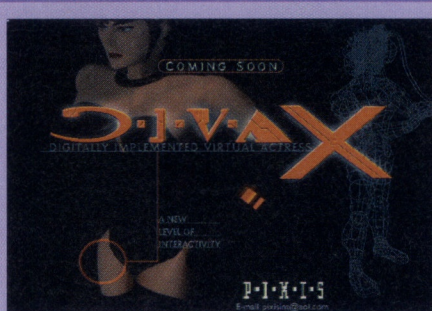
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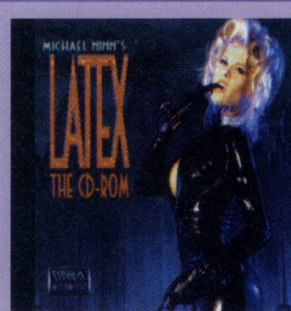
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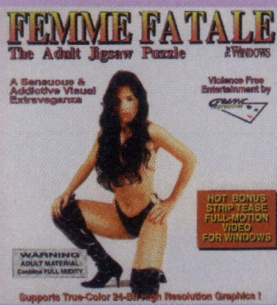
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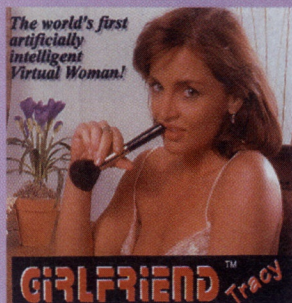
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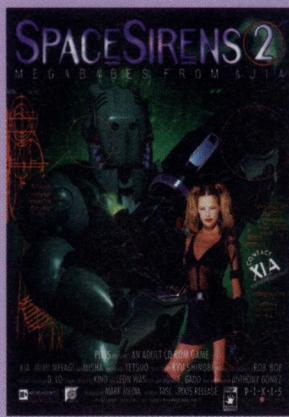


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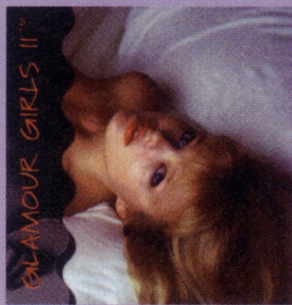
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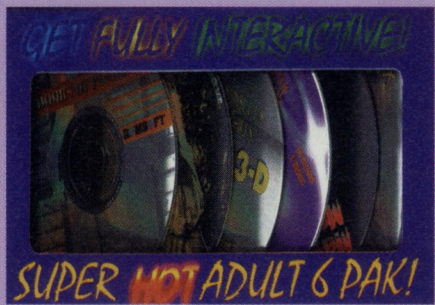


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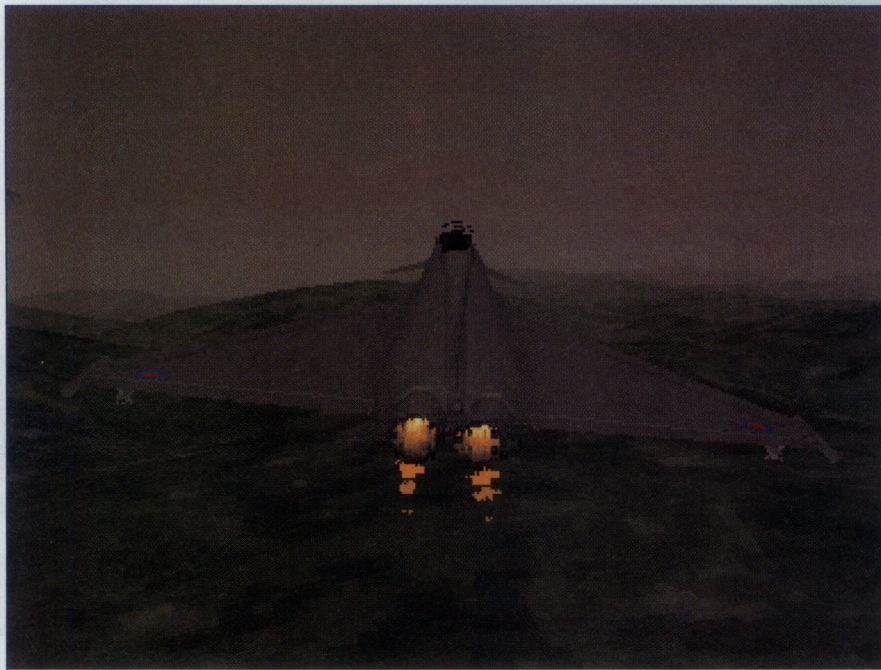
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TFX: EF2000

Flight school lesson one: Number of landings must equal number of takeoffs!



Very early in flight training, most instructors pass on this little tip to their students. It simply means that if you don't walk home from a flight, you have failed the ride, no matter how magnificent the performance prior to failing to land the aircraft.

This gem applies to **Eurofighter 2000** as well. The objective of every mission includes a safe return to base. Otherwise, you have not done as well as you should have. *Ocean Software, Ltd.* has thoughtfully included a flight school in **EF2000** to help you master the arts of takeoff, landing and air refueling. The necessity of takeoff and landing skills is obvious. Air refueling is also important in this game, however. Afterburner uses huge quantities of jet fuel in very little time. Air combat demands will probably have you jettisoning your fuel tanks before they are empty to improve turning ability. As a result, you will often need to hit a tanker to complete the mission objectives or just to get back to base without flaming out!

Last month we took a look at **EF2000's** Instant Action missions to get a feel for the game. Now we'll put in some practice on the first skills you need to mastery to get ready for the campaign.

Where most flight sims allow you to takeoff and land without much difficulty, **EF2000** is going to require some practice before you can display your skills with pride. This aircraft requires constant attention and a skilled hand for a satisfactory result. The previous article mentioned reducing resolution and detail to achieve a better frame rate. Reduced stick

sensitivity during takeoff, landing and air refueling was also discussed. These two techniques will help keep you from overcontrolling the aircraft during "finesse" maneuvers. You can pause the game and reset these parameters for regular flight.

Takeoff: Where the rubber leaves the road!

Select "Simulator" and pick the takeoff mission. Read the takeoff briefing and pay attention! Make sure you know which runway you are using. You can takeoff from an unassigned runway, but at best you risk embarrassment for being so stupid. At worst, you may put yourself on a runway with a strong tailwind that prevents a successful takeoff, or a crosswind that puts you in the weeds. After you know where you're going, accept the mission.

The tower will clear you to taxi to a specific runway and give the winds. The wind report will tell you which way the plane will want to drift on takeoff. Taxi with care; this aircraft will fold a gear and crash if you drive it like a car. At first, you may find it easier to taxi on one engine, which makes ground speed more controllable. Using small throttle movements, keep the speed around 10-12 knots; it's displayed in the upper left corner of the HUD. Slow to 5-8 knots before making any turns. You can use the wheel brakes, but they are pretty abrupt. The <W> key is an on/off braking key. If you hit it, the brakes stay on until you tap it again. This makes gradual braking difficult. Just plan ahead for turns and reduce throttle early to slow down.



Line up on the centerline of the runway and let it roll forward a little to make sure you are going straight down the runway. If you light the burner with the nosewheel cocked, you are going to be in the weeds in seconds! Set the brakes, make sure you start the other engine if you taxied on one, and slowly wind the power up to about 85%. Center the flight controls, release brakes, throttle up to 100% and light the burner at about 30 knots.

Easy there, Bigfoot!

Maintain the centerline with small, gentle corrections using the rudders or you'll soon be doing an imitation of an all-terrain **EF2000**. At about 120 knots, slowly ease the stick back to 10 degrees of pitch. When you get a positive indication of increasing altitude, raise the gear and come out of burner. Congratulations! You're airborne.

The problem area is staying on the pavement. It takes quick recognition and constant tiny corrections to stay on centerline. If you find yourself in the mud, don't panic; make small steering corrections back towards the runway. Still rotate at about 120 knots, even if you are in the grass. You'll make it, but you won't be proud of it. Your crewchief will expect you to wash the mud off the aircraft!

Reattaching yourself to the earth:

The art of landing

From the simulator menu, select the landing mission, read the brief and accept. You will start 3 miles out on a straight-in approach to the runway. Pause the game right here and set up, or you are going to be behind the aircraft. Set your throttle to 81%, select the wide-angle HUD view, put out the speed brake with the key and lower the gear with <G>. Until you get the hang of it, use the <I> key to select the Instrument Landing System. The ILS will define the proper glide-slope with a series of boxes to fly through on the HUD. ILS also gives you a Vertical Velocity Indicator on the right side of the HUD; it's the key for successful landings. Now release the pause and start flying.

Like most jet simulators, you control your

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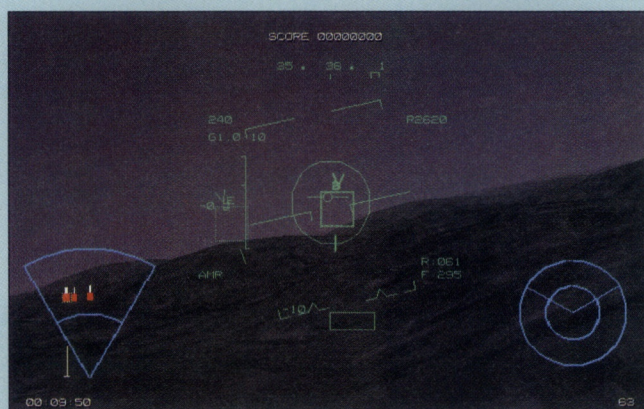
speed with pitch and sink rate with power. Use a target airspeed of 150 knots; try to stay within 10 knots either way. Remember, pitch is key to airspeed; raise the nose to slow down, lower it to speed up. Small corrections are again mandatory. To follow the glide slope, put the flight path indicator on the top center of the boxes and close with the runway. If you are sinking to the bottom of the boxes, close the speed brake to cut sink rate. Once you have the power set, try not to change it much; it's easier to cycle the boards instead. Small corrections with aileron and rudder will hold the centerline.

The moment of truth!

When you get in close, ignore the last 3 glideslope boxes and put the FPI on the first third of the runway. Stow the boards and line up gently, right on centerline. You must keep a close eye on the VVI on the right side of the HUD until touchdown. The tick mark in the middle of the scale is level flight; you must keep the caret not more than two caret widths below this tick. If you touchdown with too much sink, you'll be treated to a wild sequence of views of the inside of the cockpit spinning around and then an overhead view of an **EF2000** smacking into the ground and making a nice fireball. I've seen that many, many times.

As you slowly sink through 40 feet, ease the power to idle. Keep the nose up; you definitely don't want the nosewheel to touch down first! When the wheels squeak on the runway, hit the speed brake. Ease the nose down, apply wheel brakes and gently use the rudders to stay on the runway. Remember, stomping on the rudders will fold a gear and you'll see the fireball. This is a tough sim to land; don't get discouraged. You will master it.

There are two tough areas: maintaining the centerline with small corrections both in flight and on the ground, and maintaining a low sink rate for the last 50-100 feet of the approach. Solve the first problem with stick scaling and early, small corrections. Solve the second one by holding attitude and adding a little power when necessary.



Air refueling: That big gas station in the sky!

If you've ever had the low fuel light glaring at you miles from the home 'drome, you'll know why tanker crews rarely have to buy drinks when visiting the bar at a fighter base. This skill is perhaps the toughest to master in **EF2000**. There are a few hints, but mostly you need to practice, practice, practice.

Pick a refueling mission from the simulator menu and accept it. You'll need your fastest

frame rate and best controllability to make corrections while refueling, so make the necessary changes to display and stick scaling. Push the <TAB> key to get your communications menu and select "Flight Comms" then "Join". The tanker crew will clear you to refuel and direct you to the correct basket. Use your wide-angle HUD in the initial phases. Hit <Shift> <'> to get the refueling data in the HUD. Put the FPI right on the track box in the HUD. The number above the box is your closure speed; if it's negative, he's going away. Use a closure of 50 until you are within 3 miles. Then cut the closure to about 20 knots. You have to switch to the cockpit view to deploy the refueling probe; then just hit the <'> key.

"Fill 'er up, check the oil, get the windshield and put it on my NATO card!"

When you can see the tanker's engines and the refueling drogue clearly, cut your closure to about 3 knots using the speed brake. Close the boards and adjust power to hold the slow closure. Common advice on moving to the drogue is to approach it at a "walking" speed. Two or three knots of closure is fine from a few hundred yards out. Don't stare at the drogue or you'll end up dutch rolling all over the sky behind the tanker. Just fly formation on the tanker, scanning around his wing, fuselage and the drogue. Make tiny corrections with a slow hand. Minimize your throttle movements. When you finally make contact, be even more smooth. This is the toughest aspect of **EF2000**; you'll have to work

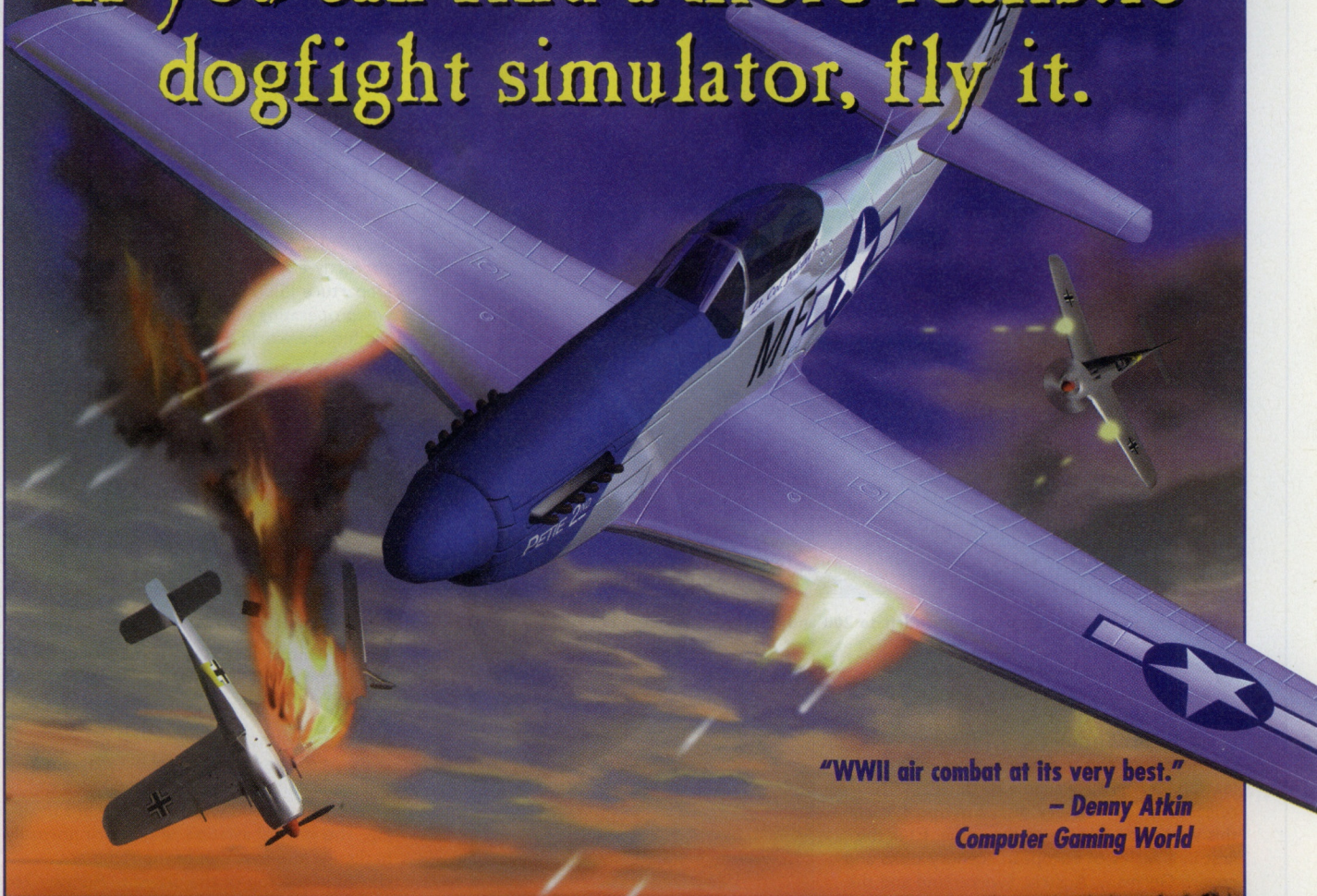
to master it.

This game has a proper, realistic level of difficulty for takeoff, landing and air refueling. It's tough to master, but the challenge will keep your interest. If you just give up, there is a feature to automatically land and air refuel. But real aviators will master the skills!

Next month's article will focus on weapons employment! Now go learn to land and air refuel! ♦

John Nolan

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Flight Simulator 5.1 Tour — Europe



Passing the FY NDB on departure - turn left to 200 and intercept the Tango 283 radial

Europe on a lot less than \$5 a day — Touring BAO's scenery disk for **Flight Simulator 5.1**

For **Flight Simulator 5.1** fanatics, there can never be "too much of a good thing." At least, BAO Publishing seems to think so. They released a new scenery disk, **Europe I**, early this year as an add-on to the game. **EI** is the first in a series of European scenery disks and covers Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands. At this point, **Europe II** is still in the concept stage; there is no proposed release date.

"Instruments 'R' Us!"

The emphasis for **EI** appears to be a little different than the usual **FS** scenery disk. There's an abundance of generalized visuals; BAO has included the major roads, cities, mountains, lakes and rivers. All are supposedly in their correct geographical locations. Unlike the *Microsoft* scenery disks, there are not many "tourist attractions" depicted in the scenery. The buildings are generic, and there are far fewer of them. You won't find a list of famous places and their geographic coordinates in the README file, either. If you want to see a famous landmark, you will have to locate it and identify it on your own. **Europe II** would undoubtedly include more specialized landmarks and guidance.

The main focus appears to be on the accurate placement of aviation facilities. The airport listing includes 135 facilities, with 102 of those in Germany. Airport diagrams are available for 19 of the fields. While there are no "published" instrument departure plates which cover ILS procedures at six different airports. Most of the airports have



The Frankfurt Terminal - fly low enough and you can read the signs on the buildings

one or more ILS frequencies listed in the manual. The NAVLIST1.TXT file included on the disk gives the latitude, longitude and frequency for 170 VOR's and 199 NDB's. Clearly, this add-on is focused on instrument flight practice.

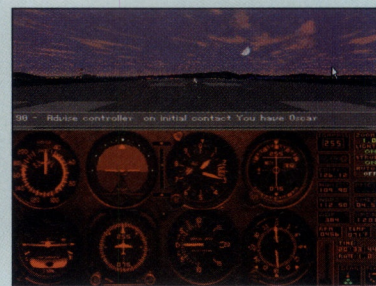
To make use of all these electronic aids, BAO provides miniaturized copies of the European Enroute Low Altitude Charts that cover the countries on the disk. This is an important addition, and certainly adds to "realism" when planning a flight across Europe. You can fly the actual airways that are in daily use. Be sure to check the chart legend for an explanation of the symbols. You wouldn't want to get caught flying the wrong way down a one way airway, would you?

So, grab the manual and the charts and plan a scenic flight up the Rhine! Stuttgart has an airport diagram in the manual, so start there. After an invented departure, fly up the river to Frankfurt and shoot an ILS to a full stop. While weather effects can be used for added visual enhancement, don't forget the clock. Go to the World menu and choose

Set Time and Season. Set up a late afternoon takeoff; by the time you get to Frankfurt in a 182 it will be full dark. The sunset effects and shadows are excellent.

Creating a departure: Leaving town in the approved manner

The ILS approach charts in the manual are a great aid in practicing instrument approaches. A few published departures would also have been nice. The ability to correctly execute a Standard Instrument Departure (SID) is an equally required skill when operating out of the busier airports around the world. For some oversimplified



Dusk at Stuttgart, Rwy 26 - if you sit on the runway too long, airliners will taxi past and takeoff!

practice, try this one.

Refer to the Stuttgart airport diagram in the manual. It'll give you a general idea of where you are and which way you are heading. The general aviation aircraft are normally parked at the east end of the ramp area shown in the top of the diagram. Runway 26 will be active, so you would taxi east on the parallel down to the departure end. Of course, the program will set you up on the end of the runway, but it's standard practice to review the airport diagram when operating out of an unfamiliar airport.

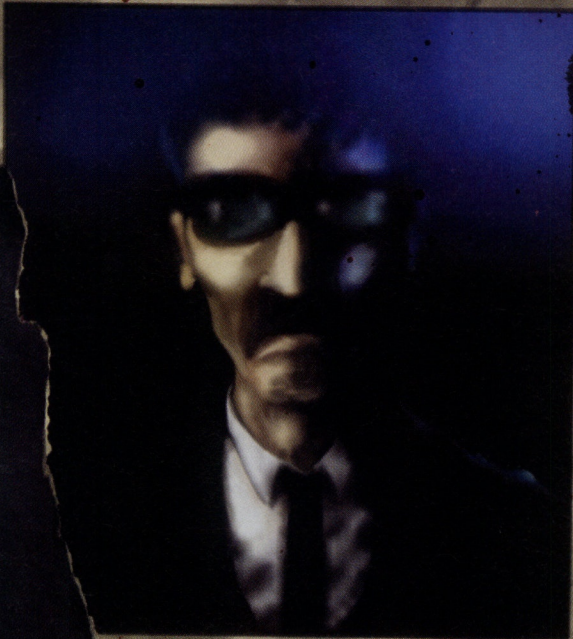
After takeoff, proceed direct to the SY Stuttgart NDB (384), then turn left to a heading of 200 and intercept the Tango (112.5) 283 radial to the Wibad fix. Reaching Wibad, proceed direct to Karlsruhe (115.95). Climb and maintain 2000 feet until reaching SY, intercept the radial at or above 2500 feet and maintain until reaching Wibad. A piece of cake! If only all instrument departures were this simple! If only you had a plate to refer to!

Now take a look at the L-6 chart included with the program. Tango is approximately in the middle of the chart. Wibad is defined as the intersection of the Tango 283 radial and the Sulz (116.1) 005 radial. To avoid a lot of radio tuning in the air when you should be flying, set up your radios on the ground. You'll want the SY NDB in the ADF, Tango in Nav1 with a 283 radial and Sulz in Nav2 showing a 005 radial. The easy way to do this is to use the Nav/Comm menu in the top menu bar. Just select the radio you wish to set and type in the settings. <Shift><Tab>

YOU'RE-Next Metro Times

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2050
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DAILY 50¢
DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER



"The Bullet" McCree meets his untimely demise.

Bicycle a legal Repair arduous g on ukes our as a now legendary Main St. incident. On May 26, Suzee the Bicycle Babe skidded out near the fire hydrant on Derby and Main, flipped, and landed face-down on a vomit-covered manhole. As if on cue, the manhole slid open and a pack of Sewer Rats hauled Suzee off for a leisurely mid-afternoon snack.

The Architect Guild, in a last-ditch effort to save the city's landmark structures from the crippling excesses of the Dog Boys and Crap Pukes, have pledged their support to the Bicycle Messenger's effort.

Please see MESSENGER, A17

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Acid Attack Burns Overlord To A Crisp

■ Action in city-wide gang warfare heats up as the brutal killing of Frank "The Bullet" McCree leaves a power vacuum in the Northside. Responsibility for yesterday's assault remains a mystery.

By Zippy Smith, TIMES STAFF WRITER

Chaos reigns today in the Northwest District as kingpin Frank "The Bullet" McCree fell victim to a vicious and grisly acid blade bludgeoning.

His body, horribly disfigured by the noxious weapon, was discovered stapled to a street sign at 10:15 pm last night by a roving band of Headbangers on their way to break up the annual Disco Freak Ball at the County Museum.

"This hot and skanky stuff was dripping on my skull, so I looked up and there he was," stated the Headbanger who found McCree. "He looked like something that came out my butt," he further reflected. Other Headbangers who were present verified this assessment.

Experts at the scene say it looked like the work of the 7th Ave. Metal Burn Mutant Pack. But a letter pinned by a wad of gum to McCree's melted nose claims responsibility for the Happy Camper Gang in the name or their current employer, Billy "The Spike" Hernandez.

Whoever it was, they had no problem disposing of McCree's favorite hired guns, the brutal Monks of the Emerald Order. According to the Banker's Guild, sacred ritual objects from the now-defunct Order have fallen into the hands of a Used Car Salesman and are expected to fetch six figures on the black market. The Used Car Salesman was unavailable for comment but through his Faceman, disavowed any involvement in McCree's murder.

According to sources close to the grieving family, McCree was wearing his custom-fitted Kevalar Vest at the time of the attack, but it "had as much the same effect as soft butter resisting a butcher's knife," said one family member.

Kevalar, a high-tech material, had this day, "McCree was a two-time crook who couldn't handle himself properly."



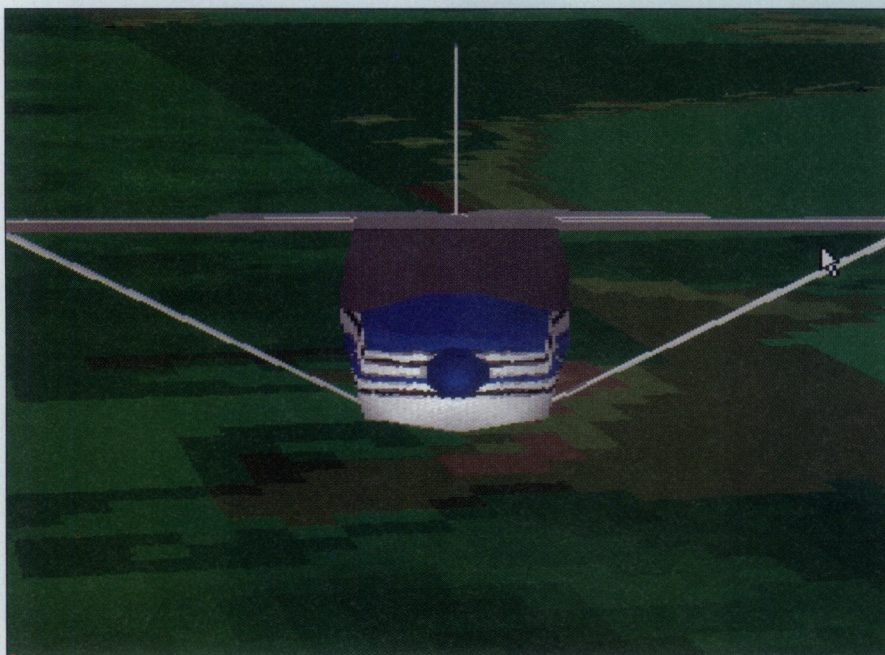
Headbanger who found McCree.

■ City Headed For Apocalypse Doomsday Cult Proclaims "The End Is Near"

By Stiv White, TIMES STAFF WRITER

In a direct assault on the beliefs of the "Followers of Squiggly," Doomsday cult leader...

CHAOS OVERLORDS



Cruising over the Black Forest to the Rhine at 1000' AGL - not much detail in the countryside

will switch your OBI 2 and ADF displays in the bottom nav instrument when inflight. It's almost as easy as having a good co-pilot to do all the work for you.

Note that Wibad is on airway A9, a one-way airway from Neckar to Sulz. Just to the south of the big, blue one way arrow you'll see FL 240 over 5500. That symbol defines the vertical limits of control; the airway is controlled airspace between those altitudes. Now look in the Karlsruhe navaid data box. The frequency, 115.95, is shaded blue. The shading indicates abnormal status; normally you would not use it for navigation. All of this information is available in the legend box on the front page of the chart; be familiar with it and refer to it whenever you are in doubt.

Cruising the Rhine without benefit of a boat....or detail!

From Wibad, just head west, flying over the Black Forest to the Rhine valley. Hold your altitude until you clear the high ridges that are on the east side of the valley and then drop down to about 100 feet. When you get to the river, turn north; it will bring you very close to the Ried VOR, to be used as the initial approach fix for Frankfurt. The first major town on the east side of the river as you go north is Karlsruhe. You can confirm your location by tuning the KRH VOR (115.95). Although shown as abnormal, it works fine. As you continue north, you can tune Heidelberg NDB and do a touch and go at the Army Air Field there. Then you'll pass Mannheim and Worms. Get low and buzz these cities, but don't expect the detail that's available on an MS scenery disk. Remember, the emphasis was on instrument, not visual flight.



Turning at Wibad - when both radials show centered, you are over the fix

Night ILS to 07L at Frankfurt: It's a different world after dark

Perhaps the best part of the whole program is the inclusion of the six simplified ILS approach plates in the manual. These add a considerable amount of realism to the flight and allow you to challenge yourself to do better every time out. A quick overview of the plate will help to organize the approach.

The top quarter of the plate holds the frequency box and the plate identifier. The box makes all the freq's readily available when flying a single pilot approach. You also find the localizer freq, identifier and the field elevation. The plate description on the right is there to ensure that you are flying to the assigned runway. Remember, Frankfurt has a 07R as well, with completely different frequencies and missed approach procedures!

The next section as you drop down the plate is the "overhead" view. This is how the approach would look if you were watching from above. It shows the Initial Approach Fixes (IAF) at Ried and Taunus, where you start your approach. It also shows the holding pattern you will occupy

when things are busy at Frankfurt. At 4000 feet, use one-minute inbound legs when you fly the racetrack, turning in the directions indicated. Due to winds, you may have to adjust the outbound leg time to make the inbound time correct. Fly the indicated course inbound to the VOR and use standard rate turns. When cleared for the approach, follow the depicted courses to intercept the localizer. The light arrow shape leading to the runway indicates the final approach course, shown as 071. The frequencies for all the applicable nav aids are shown in this section of the plate. The altitudes shown would be mandatory at those points unless ATC assigned others.



Buzzing the Heidelberg Army Airfield - see if you can make the tower operator duck!

Below the overhead view is the side view. It depicts the approach from glideslope intercept to the runway, and gives the published missed approach instructions in case something goes wrong. The distances from the FFM VOR and the altitudes associated with them provide a cross-check for your ILS guidance. You should intercept the glideslope at 4000 feet, 15.5 miles from the VOR. Normally, you should double check your altitude at the outer marker (OM) to make sure everything is working correctly. The OM is shown at 8.1 DME, and you should be at 1650' if on glideslope. You'll also get the blue light and beep in the cockpit when you cross the marker; use these cues to remind you to check altitude, gear and flaps, because you're about two minutes out.

The last section gives the decision height for the approach. When the altimeter shows this altitude, you must have the runway environment in sight and be in a position to land. If either of these conditions is not met, immediately go around and execute the published missed approach.

While the scenery detail in this disk may not be the equal of the MS products, it certainly covers the facilities to a much greater degree. There are almost an unlimited number of departures, nav legs and approaches you can set up and practice. Go to it, and remember, the mark of a real instrument pilot is "2, 2 and 20". That's always staying within 2 degrees of heading, 2 knots of air-speed and 20 feet of altitude. ♦

John Nolan



The New State of the Art in Adventure Gaming!

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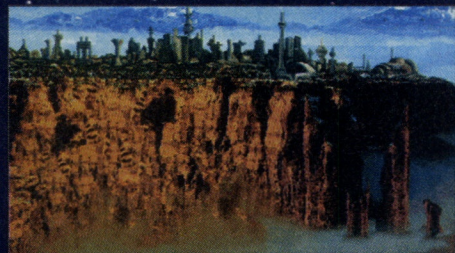
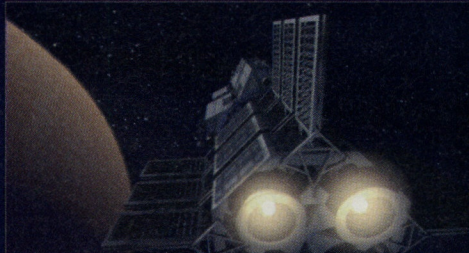
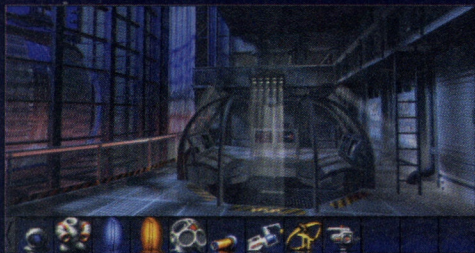
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Rebel Assault II

Designed by Vince Lee
Published by LucasArts
Platform DOS

It's back. The sequel to one of the most successful CD-ROMs ever released, *LucasArts Rebel Assault II* is a vast improvement over the original. In every way, from narrative to visuals to gameplay, the sequel has taken an enormous step forward. If you thought the first was the next best thing to watching *Star Wars* for the 83rd time, this will bring you even closer to nirvana. If you thought the original was one of the most overrated games ever released (interactive *Star Wars*? You wish...), this won't change your opinion completely, but it is good enough to warrant serious consideration.

The first game suffered from some of the most vague controls seen in a game. That's been fixed. The video was of rather poor quality (which many people seemed to overlook because it was, after all, *Star Wars*). All of the video in *Rebel II* is professionally shot, with superb integration into the rendered backgrounds (and a few choice scenes from the actual movies). The cut scenes in



the first were excellent. The sequel's are considerably better, and in SVGA to boot.

The story running through the game finds the player as Rookie One, taking on the Empire yet again. The bad guys are building a secret weapon; it's up to you to uncover and destroy it. You'll switch from third and first person cockpit battles to third and first-person ground combat.

Unfortunately, *Rebel Assault II* still suffers from a fundamental gameplay flaw that gives it moderate replayability (it's a bit like an adventure game in that once you've been through it, it'll sit on your shelf). It's one it shares with the prequel as well as the seemingly infinite number of the copycat games



that have followed. You're just hanging on for an admittedly amazing looking ride, with little windows of interactivity to give you the illusion of being part of the game. It's wonderful to see such beautiful graphics in a game, but the 3D modes will make you wish you were playing *TIE Fighter* or *Dark Forces* instead. In fact, this entire product really makes you wish LucasArts would merge those two superb games into a *Rebel Assault III*. Now wouldn't that be a spectacular game? ♦

Steve Bauman

Hexen

Designed by Raven Software
Published by GT Interactive
Platform DOS

Originality is a good thing, but quality and craft are also important.

Raven's *Hexen* is ample evidence for that; sure, it's VGA, it's a first-person 3D action game in a medieval dungeon-style setting, etc. But it's done so well it's still well worth playing even if you've burned out on this kind of thing.

What sets *Hexen* apart from the multitudes of *DOOM* clones available? Like *DOOM* and just a few others (*Dark Forces* comes particularly to mind), the game shouts quality with each step you take through its 30 levels. The attention to atmospheric details in particular gives *Hexen* a kind of dynamism the tradition of moving through a bunch of squarish, texture-mapped rooms can't hold a candle to; the sound of wind in the trees, owls hooting, distant clankings and thunkings and so on are all ramped up to the point where – as in the classic *Dungeon Master* – the sense of being in a place, with things going on all around you, is intuitively constant. There's little to break you out of the frame of feeling like you've entered a living gameworld, with its own logic and continuity; that's a greater challenge to have overcome than any of the more computer-oriented technical feats games of late have been showcasing.

The dynamism of *Hexen*'s environment is

paralleled by the variety of approaches you can take to same. With three different characters, each of whom can start at one of five different levels of difficulty (I like playing Pope, myself – just to see what it feels like to be the Ultimate Kombatant Against Evil Incarnate), replay value is almost infinite. The Fighter, Mage and Cleric – the holy triumvirate of fantasy gamers – each present different tactical challenges. The Fighter's a close-in kind of guy; brute force is his forté. The Mage is a spellcaster, and has to start out actively defensive against approaching opponents, with good ranged weapons and spellcasting skills but weak armor and poor speed. The Cleric (my favorite), like the Mage, gains strengths from distance, but has better defensive and speed abilities than the latter. He's the character with balance, and balance, as we all know from traditional CRPGs, is the easiest to work with.

The overall structure of *Hexen*'s world moves it towards the strengths of the best of earlier CRPGs as well. With the need to explore sub-levels within levels, and to move non-linearly between levels, to resolve various game challenges alongside the more traditional 3D combat, *Hexen* provides vastly



more various gameplay than has been heretofore available in the genre.

Put such variety together with the speed of VGA graphics animation, the radically increased freedom of movement (jumping and turning, leaping from tumbling precipices, rushing past closing walls – the game is replete with all the nightmare terrors of a real, medieval dungeon), an excellent bestiary and armory and equally excellent multi-player support (possibly the best in the industry right now), and you've got a must-have game. *Hexen* is probably the most appealing 3D action game out there right now. Cynics about the genre (like myself) will be converted on the spot. ♦

Steve Wartofsky

The Hive

Designed by Rainbow America
Published by Trimark Interactive
Platform Windows 95

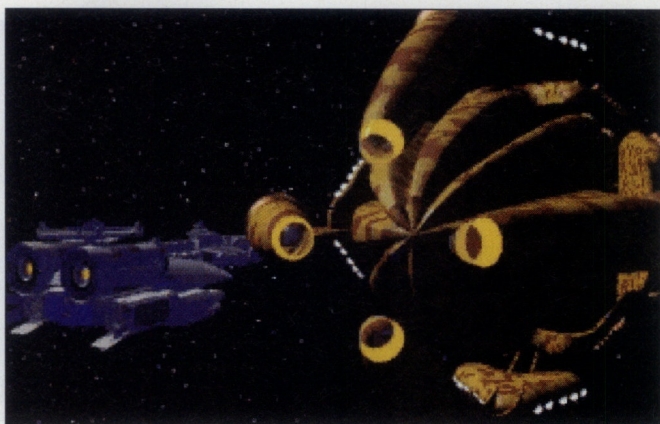
Is there a trend here, or is everybody still just scratching their heads over the phenomenal success of LucasArts' **Rebel Assault** and figuring there must be *something* to this kind of game or people wouldn't be buying it in droves?

I vote for the latter explanation, and **The Hive** makes it clear that there's definitely something to be done with a formula that's usually ripe for disaster (or at the very least, abysmal gameplay). The first-person perspective scrolling shooter seems here to stay, especially with the release of **Rebel Assault II**, and **The Hive** will no doubt prove for most serious gamers that this kind of thing is actually playable, too.

The main advantage of **The Hive** over other games of this sort is its variety. The traditional shooting gallery play is accompanied – more and more as you progress through **The Hive**'s 20 levels – by some puzzle elements, some areas where your movement is less pre-scripted and more **Myst**-like, other sections where your perspective on the situation is changed. You don't feel like you're moving the same cursor over the same sections of the screen with changes only in the animations; rather, you find yourself effectively caught within the fiction of

each carefully-presented scenario, ready to play it through for the umpteenth time to figure out how to handle that fourth guy on the right behind the steel beam. The *pacing* of the action is just right – there's enough time to think about what you're doing, and just enough time to observe the unfolding situation closely enough to anticipate your next move (the next time through).

Most importantly, though, **The Hive** gives most cinematically-oriented game designs a serious run for the money in sheer graphic and aural splendor. The two included CD-ROMs are jam-packed with the best rendered graphics sequences ever to have shown in PC gaming, and the music is probably the most professionally conceived soundtrack scoring we've yet heard for a game. True, none of this has much to do with the actual



gameplay – but it's worth noting for those interested in enjoying what is essentially a movie with interactive elements.

All told, you're not going to find a **Riddle of Master Lu** or a **Raiden** in **The Hive** – it's neither an in-depth, traditional adventure nor a classic space shoot-'em-up; but that's not the point. The point in **The Hive** is to do an interactive movie without resorting to FMV techniques or to radically limiting player input, and in this **The Hive** scores admirably. ♦

Steve Wartofsky



People say the moment of death is calm and serene...

Zone Raiders

At first blush, you might think that Virgin's **Zone Raiders** is another of these arcade racing games that are suddenly popping up like mushrooms after the first spring rain. Not so. True, you are driving what looks like a car, but really, it's a hovercraft. And the game plays more like **Doom** than like Virgin's real arcade racer, **Screamer**.

In a post-apocalyptic world your job is to pilot your hovercraft through a maze of elevated streets in search of parts for a jet. Once you get all those parts, you and your motley crew are gonna fly off to nirvana. If this idea bores you, you can take on your buddies in multi-player mayhem.

Whoever designed the highway system in this world was totally psychotic. Fly over a hill too fast, catch air, and the next thing you know you're over the guardrail and falling into the void. And then there are the "city blocks." You can fly up the steeply sloped sides of buildings, cruise across the roof and drop down into the next block, like a skateboarder in a concrete paradise.

In addition to traditional driving controls, you can also strafe and that's what makes the game feel so **Doom**-esque. You do a lot of sliding out, taking a few shots, then sliding



back into cover. You'll also find that full out acceleration often buys you a fast ticket to the junk yard.

Each of your missions has a time limit, but you have unlimited lives. Destroying sensors along the track will freeze the clock for a while. If the timer reaches zero, a very lethal flying enemy will begin stalking you.

Between missions, you can trade in your points for a better hovercraft. And here is a potential problem. Suppose you "clear" all enemies from the roads, get to the goal, and

get wasted by the bad guys defending it. When you die, you lose your points and are sent back to the starting line. Now, you can race back to the end unhampered, but without killing anything, you won't get any points, and you'll never save enough for that nifty new 'craft.

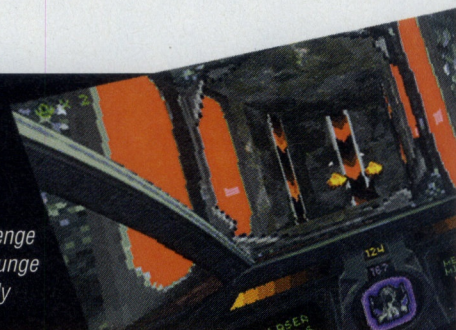
Overall, **Zone Raiders** is a kick, if you approach it from the right mindset — it

isn't a driving game. The strange craft you pilot, the bleak environment, the robot-tank enemies... all are great for creating atmosphere. Shoot and scoot, drive over powerups. Plasma gun ammo. Toast those bad guys, fly over the embankment and dart down that ally. Slide out from the side street, annihilate the guard tower, then take off again. Nothing but open road 'tween you and the exit. Yehaa! I like it... ♦

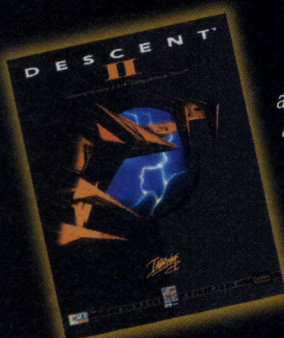
Peter Smith

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OBVIOUSLY THEY NEVER PLAYED



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Watch for the full 30-level version coming this March.

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DEVELOPED BY
Parallax Software

Wetlands

Designed & Published by
New World Computing
Platform DOS

Just as careful, animated graphics tends these days to be more appealing in an adventure game than FMV-oriented design, so, too, having a full, 3D environment to move through freely in a first-person perspective action game is generally preferable to being caught within a pre-defined motion sequence. You have to ask yourself in both instances, if that's the case, then why do designers keep coming up with FMV adventures and the first-person equivalent of the traditional overhead, scrolling shooter?

The negative explanation in the case of the action game could be that there's simply less work to do to design the actual interactive portions of such a game. Limit the player's role to moving a cursor around the screen and clicking on hot spots to kill opponents whose movements are completely scripted, and you can then focus all your attention on the graphics and sound.

To be kind, the less

cynical explanation could be that – as has always been the case with Readysoft's traditional **Dragon's Lair**-style game design – the scripted action game is more of a puzzle-oriented design than it is a pure action game, so play focus is more learning the sequence of actions you have to perform to get through a scene than it is on pure reflex skills.

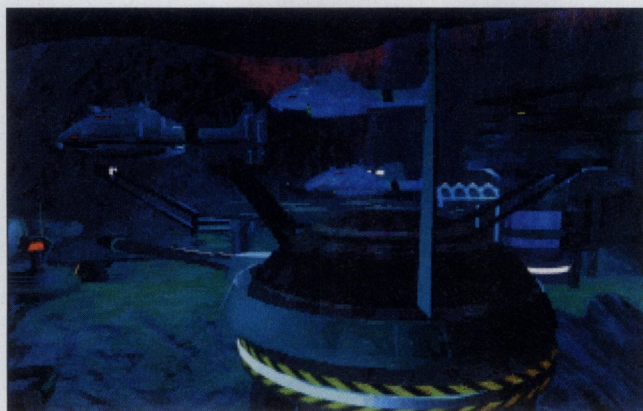
That's definitely the case with New World Computing's latest venture in this genre, **Wetlands**. Encapsulated within what is essentially a very well-done cartoon adventure are a series of "action" sequences, the

resolution of which involves learning where to click on the screen when. In theory, you can get absorbed in the fiction of each section and imagine yourself shooting your way through a bunch of opponents to reach your goal – the unfolding of the next section of the story.

In fact, though – whether it's on foot with a gun, in a spaceship, in an underwater craft, etc. (all variations on the game's main play) – you're doing virtually the same thing over and over again. The weakness of **Wetlands'** action sequences is that, despite wide variation in the depiction of what's actually going on, it feels like the same, relentless shooting gallery over, and over, and over again. Not enough has been done to sustain the fiction of the player's involvement in these portions of the game.

Fortunately for **Wetlands**, though, the pay-off for getting through such scenes is pretty spectacular. Significant effort has gone into creating a great story, with wonderful animation, excellent voice acting and fabulous atmosphere. If you're willing to fight your way past the shooting gallery portions to enjoy the well-paced story, **Wetlands** merits attention for the latter alone. Too bad there's no plain click 'n watch mode. ♦

Steve Wartofsky





VINCE MAGNOTTA

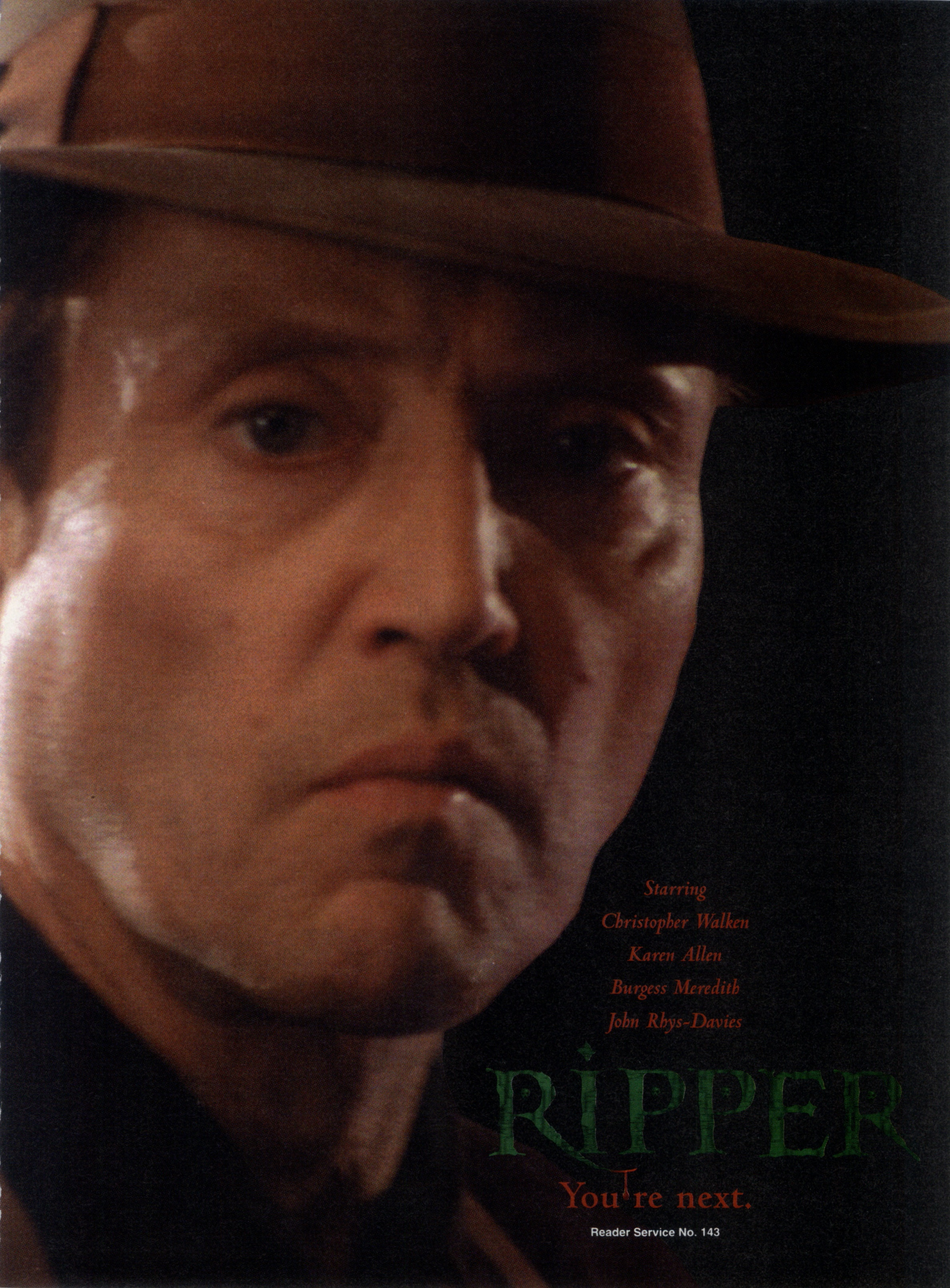
A veteran police detective operating on the fringes of the law, Detective Vince Magnotta leads the Ripper investigation and spars with Quinlan, the player's character. With a deadly temper and a secretive past, Magnotta becomes a suspect in the Ripper killings.



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PC-CD



Starring
Christopher Walken
Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies

RIPPER

You're next.

Reader Service No. 143

Generally, "hint" columns will teach you how to beat a given game, but most concern themselves with games where there is a distinct right and wrong – you know, adventure, role-playing, that sort of thing. Sports games are of a different ilk, however, requiring not only know-how, but also skill, reflexes and experience, and **NHL 96** throws yet another wrinkle into the mix – the arbitrary decision. Simply put, that means sometimes the damn program is gonna lay a lickin' on you no matter how well you play and how successfully your strat-

Hints & Tips NHL 96 EA Sports

egy is implemented. Occasionally, the reverse is also true.

During my research for this article, I experienced the most flagrant example I'd ever seen of **NHL**'s predestined results. There was but two minutes to go in the game in question and I led the Canadiens by a single goal, yet I noticed that no matter how many chances I had given them, they would not – or could not – score. Ah, a perfect spot to test my theory.

With my goalie in possession of the puck, I moved him halfway to the blueline and purposely handed the puck to an enemy player, who had no choice but to slip it home into a gaping cage. Miracle of miracles, however, the play was blown dead for no reason at all, a face-off was called in my end and the goal did not stand. Replays proved that the puck was indeed in the net, yet the program's "referee" had turned a blind eye, and decided that I wasn't going to blow this lead no matter how much I tried. This time the arbitrary decision had worked to my advantage.

That said (purely to cover myself, of course), these pearls of wisdom should assure that you'll outplay and outpace virtually any computer-based opponent. Using this gameplan I regularly double up shots on goal, outbait by a 5-1 margin, and have a huge lead-in time spent in the offensive zone. I still lose twenty-five percent of my games, but my record is good enough to have me sitting in a solid second place nearing the end of my season.

By the way, this article assumes that you don't want to "cheat" and build a super team, which will make things a whole lot easier all by itself. My team of choice is my hometown Vancouver Canucks (yes, with Mogilny), and as I write this, I'm doing a heck of a lot better than the real life team.

General tips

HINT #1: Do not accept the default camera angle. Go, instead, with one of the Sky Cams – you'll find that although you're further from the action, you'll actually be able to see the full width of the ice. That helps in determining little things, like the position of your breaking winger!

HINT #2: Build a fearsome line 1 and 2, and throw whoever else is decent on line 3. Generally speaking, these three lines will never

get so tired you have to rely on the also-ran Line 4; usually, you won't even need to turn to Line 3. Remember, a good but moderately tired player (as long as you never let the energy level diminish into the red) is always better than a low talent/ high energy combination.



HINT #3: Try choosing a team where speed is accentuated over physical strength. Injuries are few and far between, and there's much more you can do with raw acceleration.

HINT #4: Learn player attributes. Let the good passers pass and the good shooters blast away.

HINT #5: While I'm certainly not an EA programmer, I believe **NHL 96** has built-in "windows of opportunity," little time segments when the going suddenly gets real easy. If you play your cards right, you'll find that one goal may well be followed by more. It's up to you to keep the pressure on when these windows open up.

HINT #6: Most **NHL** veterans know that using the speed burst button will fatigue players more quickly, but did you know that this same philosophy applies *after* the whistle? In other words, don't waste energy chasing people after the whistle just for the fun of it, because it will tire your guys out.

HINT #7: Don't worry about fights being injurious to your player. Even a slumped dead guy springs back to perfect health when out of the penalty box.

Goaltending

HINT #1: Giveaways in the defensive zone, especially from your goalie to an enemy player, can be particularly fatal. If none of your skaters are within range, eating the puck is better than having it in your net.

HINT #2: While people whose sole purpose in life is to learn manual goalie control may disagree, stick with a computer-controlled stopper for games vs. the program. You'll get control anyway once a save has been made, and manually controlling the save action is complex.

This month we'll keep you on the ice, travel back in time & hang out with Ditka

Defense

HINT #1: Make sure to bring your guys back (yes, even forwards) into your own zone when the CPU team is on the offensive. Just having players back inside the blueline *doing nothing* will reduce the chances of an enemy goal, and certainly placing defenders between the puck carrier and your goal is a very smart move.

HINT #2: Don't worry about playing ultra-tight defense when killing penalties. The other team usually becomes ineffective (as will yours) when on the power play, and their chances of scoring may well be less than when at even strength. It's a quirk of the game, but when in Rome...

HINT #3: Try hitting and knocking down a member (any member) of the opposing team as they break out of their own zone with the puck. Once you've bopped one of their guys to the ice, you'll find that through giveaways, weak shots, and the like, their rush will usually become ineffective. This isn't quite as foolproof as it was in **NHL 95**, but it still applies.

HINT #4: When the bad guys have the puck, hit, hit, hit, smash and maim. Wail away on that poke check button, switch players and do it some more – there's no telling who you'll knock down (by the way, bodychecks are even more devastating and can cause injuries, but are much harder to perpetrate).

HINT #5: Back to hitting again. Lining up the puck carrier between your controlled player and the boards is a good thing. That doesn't mean taking a run at him from across the ice, but "up" ice, form your own zone, parallel to the side boards. Try forcing the puck carrier to the outside, then step into him, clicking the poke check button as you collide. He will fall and the puck will be fair game.

HINT #6: Why bother racing a guy to a loose puck when hacking him brutally to the ice is often the best way to beat him there? This again doesn't mimic real life (you'd get a penalty), but in **NHL 96** it's accepted.

Well, that's it for now. Some of this stuff will work better for some than others, and there's undoubtedly a few secrets I've yet to learn, but this is a pretty fair start. Good luck, and remember, sometimes **NHL 96** will pound ya, no matter what you do.

Gordon Goble



Review Old Time Baseball Stormfront Studios

Stormfront Studios' **Old Time Baseball** would appear to be the ultimate "what if" tool. With 12,000 players covering 110 seasons in its database (every player from 1871 through 1981, including players from the Negro Leagues), you may find the answers to the questions which have plagued baseball nerds for years: What if Cy Young pitched today? What if Ted Williams played on the 1995 Red Sox? What if Greg Maddux had to face Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig? With

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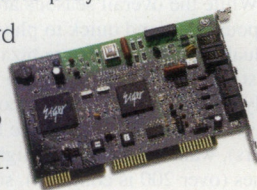
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the "Time Machine" feature of the game, one could theoretically find out how the '27 or '36 Yankees would do during the so-called "Dead Ball" era of the early 20th century.

The answer to that question is, "not well."



During that era, where pitchers dominated, the mediocre staffs of the Yanks were overwhelmed by other teams, and offset their awesome lineups. The Time Machine factors-in overall player performances during an era and applies that information when simulating seasons. When playing out entire seasons with a number of different leagues comprised of various modern and classic teams, some fascinating results were obtained. The '95 Indians didn't stand a chance in any era (thanks to the guys on CompuServe's SPRTSIM forum for the '95 *La Russa 3* stats), but the '95 Rockies did OK (with their Coors Field-assisted "murderers' row" appearing to be just that during most eras).

While the overall seasons are entertaining to pour over (and quick to play out), the individual player statistics are bizarre, to say the least. Players appear to hit too few homers (in only rare instances does someone hit the magic 40, with 25 leading the league in most years), walk a ridiculously high number of times (over 200 is common), steal too many bases (100 is average – 200 common) and make too many errors (the bug *still* exists from all of the previous *Stormfront* designs – errors are given on plays where runners do not advance). You can prove the statistical anomalies by replaying an entire season with all of teams from a given year and setting the Time Machine for that season.

The game is also plagued with other bugs and problems. The import statistics option (which works with both *La Russa* games and *STATS, Inc.*) was buggy out of the box; a patch for it was released within a week of the game's release (an all too common trend). There are other problems with the way the computer handles the pitching staff.

There are no problems, however, with the graphics. The recreations of many of the classic stadiums of the past are beyond amazing.

They are true works of art. 16 stadiums are included, with unique stadiums like Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field (you can also import *La Russa 3* stadiums). All of the stadiums come with text histories, with extra photos of each of them (for many, this alone may very well be worth the price of admission).

The whole interface of the game has a wonderful retro look to it, and the music is evocative.

When playing the game, *Old Time Baseball* is effectively *La Russa 3*,

which may or may not be a bad thing depending on your opinion of that game. Frankly, it's not a great arcade game (even though it looks like one) because the animation is jerky and the pitches to the plate don't look particularly convincing (especially when compared to the incredible pitcher-batter confrontation in *World Series Baseball* for the Sega Saturn).

As it stands, *Old Time Baseball* would be an interesting add-on for *La Russa 3*, but as a complete product, it's of lesser value. There's no question it's a brilliant concept, but gamers don't buy concepts; they buy games. As a game, it has enough minor (and a couple of major) problems that the cumulative effect makes you wonder whether *Stormfront Studios* spends too much time polishing the visuals rather than tweaking an already flawed statistical engine. The quest for the perfect graphical baseball simulation continues.

Steve Bauman

Review Quarterback Attack Digital Pictures

The latest all-video game from *Digital Pictures* is by far the best. *Quarterback Attack*, while not causing the *Front Page Sports* developers at *Dynamix* to lose any sleep at night, provides such a unique gaming experience that one is willing to overlook some of the inherent flaws of any all-video game.

Quarterback Attack simulates a single game, where you, the player, are the rookie substitute QB who must take over the team and lead them to victory. Your coach, played by Mike Ditka (or maybe "overplayed")

would be a more apt description), offers encouragement, tips, and derision on the sidelines. You control the offense; when you don't have the ball, you'll see a series of highlights which show the opponent driving to the goal line, or punting.

Once back on offense, you choose the play (there's no play editor, another limitation of the all-video format) from a decent selection of plays (too many long passes). When you walk up to the line of scrimmage, this is where things get interesting. The entire game (with one exception) is played out from a first-person point of view. When you fall in under center, the view is from behind your facemask. The camera pans right and left, and it's up to you to read the defense. At this point, you can run the chosen play or set an audible. Though I haven't played professional football, it would seem that this aspect of the game is more realistic than football sims allowing you a top-down view of the entire field.

Once you snap the ball you hand it off (if you've chosen a running play), and the play runs its course (again, you're only controlling the QB). If you've chosen a pass play, the game shifts to an over-the-shoulder view. You drop back, using the arrow keys to dodge the occasional rushers, and select receivers with the keyboard. When you choose, say, the tight end, the game cuts to the receiver running their route. If the receiver is open, press the space bar and throw the pass (on the higher levels you have to actually choose a target for the pass). You can also choose another receiver or scramble. If you take too long, you stand a good chance of being sacked.

One thing the game could have used is a more obnoxious Ditka. I can't imagine him



saying things like, "You're good, kid. We'll get 'em next time." I wonder if he ever said that to Harbaugh?

As is usual with the stuff from *Digital Pictures*, the video comes up instantly, and is of fairly high quality. Like any all-video game, some of the scenes will become very familiar if you play more than a few games, and that familiarity is exactly the thing that may make *Quarterback Attack* an occasional diversion. However, if you're a football fan, this challenging game offers an interesting and unique alternative to the more in-depth simulations out there.

Steve Bauman



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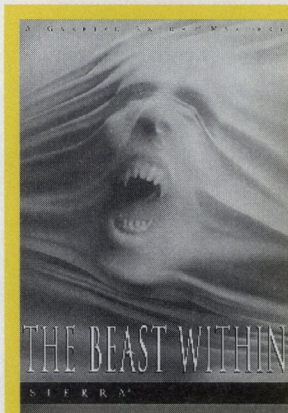
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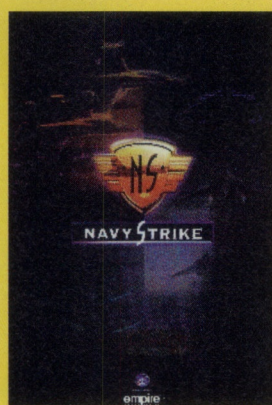
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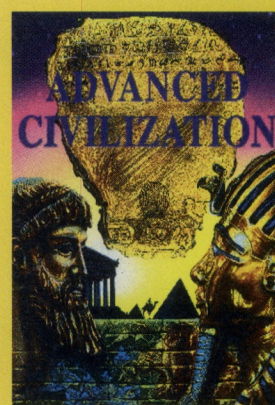
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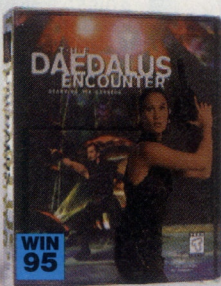
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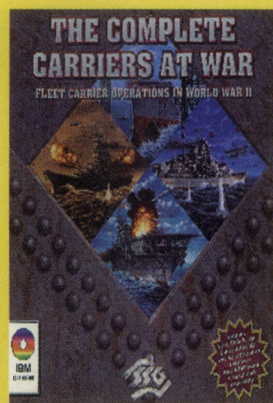
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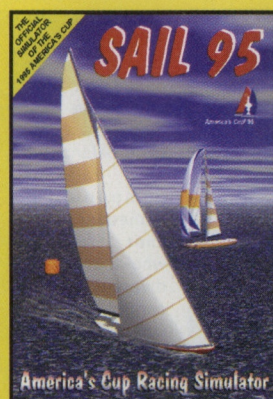


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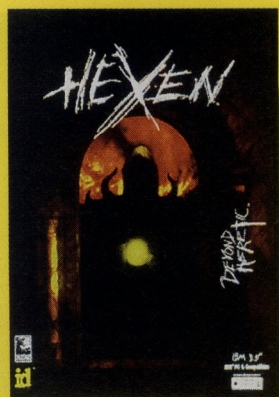
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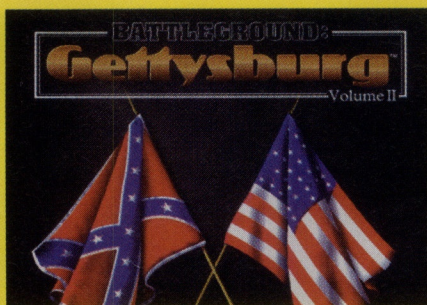
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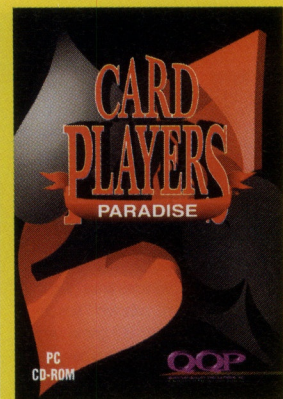
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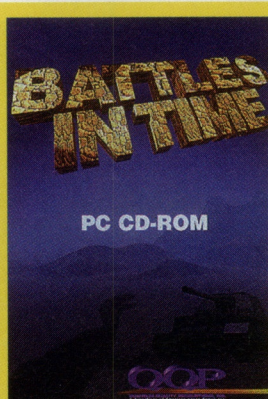
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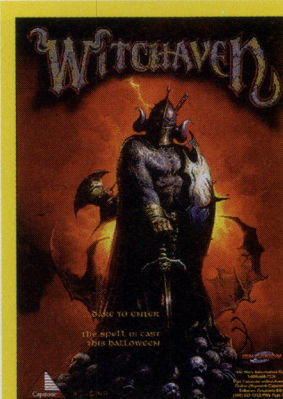
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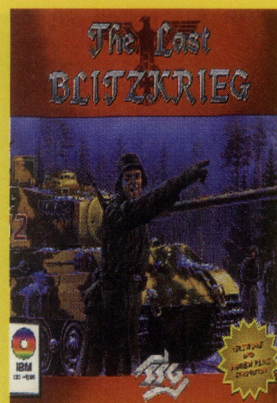
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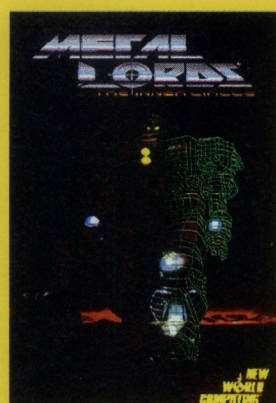
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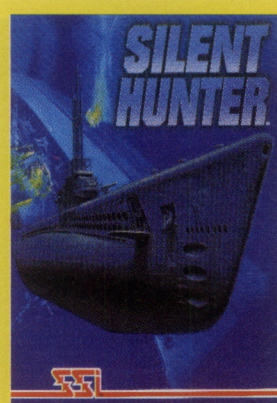
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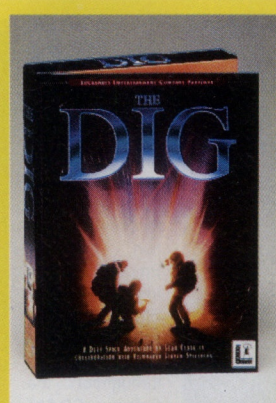
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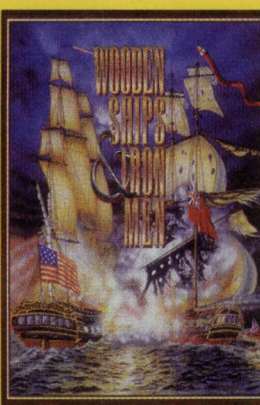
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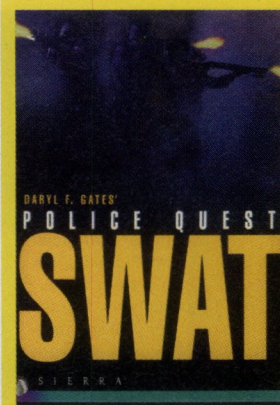
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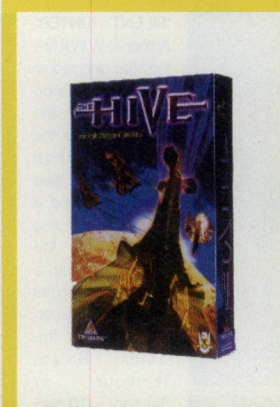
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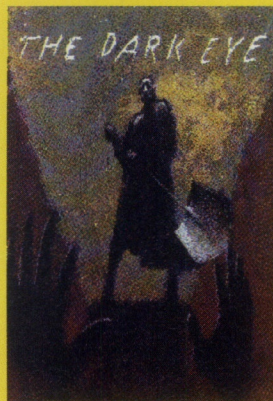
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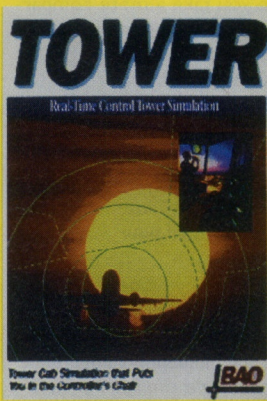
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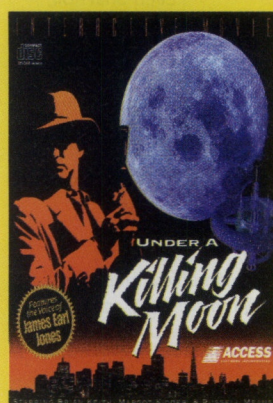
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More Propeller Heads Out There

Dear Editor,

First off I would like to say thanks for a great magazine. I have them going back now to 1991. I finally subscribed and find your mail order service as efficient and up to date as the magazine. Anyway, I am sort of replying to your comments made in September 1995 (late I know) regarding what we want to see in the magazine. I have the December issue in my hands and must congratulate you on the new format. There is certainly nothing I would like taken out, but I really do like the highlights on technology you do every now and again. Being a technical manager for a large PC wholesaler here in Oz I love to keep up to date in everything that goes on in the industry. I think the lure of something newer and faster coming out is what keeps the industry rocking along and a dedicated column on the latest hardware, both mainstream and unusual, would add to an already brilliant magazine. I think you could keep the information fairly technical in keeping with the adult tone of the rest of the magazine (even at the risk of being called a propeller head again). I think that while a lot of people may not understand what it really means, they will ask for it and eventually the incredibly expensive option becomes mainstream because of user demand. Final question: what happened to your bug patches/fixes column? I found that really handy to have available on a monthly basis.

Sincerely,
David Baker
Melbourne, Australia

Dear David,

Thanks for the nice comments! The key point on the hardware/technology column is "now and again." We feel that it would be a disservice to force a regular feature into the magazine on this aspect of the industry, as major technological changes and/or advances tend to happen intermittently. It's a lot better to provide the good information strategically at the point where it's most relevant than to keep up a regular column that too often has to turn into filler for want of anything really important to focus on. Then, too, we make no pretensions to having full-scale, objective testing resources to base any hardware recommendations on, and in hardware, unlike in software, there are objective, testable qualities that readers should be informed about when they're given recommendations for same. We therefore leave that kind of analysis and reporting to those who really have the resources and equipment to provide quality information, and refuse to make any pretenses at doing same, at the risk of misleading our readership. In any event, we will continue to provide hardware features when appropriate, and when we feel we can be truly informative on same.

On your last point, look to Interactive Entertainment as the resource for bug patches. One of the advantages of a CD-ROM medium is that you can have not only the reference but, ideally, the actual fix on offer, and you'll find that's a regular feature of the latter. - Ed.

Context is Everything

Dear Splus,

I continue to enjoy your magazine, but would love to have you take a more comparative approach in your features and reviewing. There's nothing as helpful as having a new product contextualized by reference to the work that's come before; and, even more importantly, it's really great when you can offer a full-length, in-depth comparison between a bunch of contemporary releases in a particular genre. Here's my vote for seeing more of both in the pages of your magazine.

Barry Fenton
Cody, Wyoming

Dear Barry,

We have offered such in-depth, comparative articles in the past (on flight simulations most recently), and hope to do more of the same in the future. Waves of software releases lend themselves to such an approach, and we try our best to have the space and timeliness to put together such features when it's deemed most useful.

Unfortunately, given the rapid growth of the industry overall and the pressure to continue to try to provide coverage for a veritable ocean of software, the space we have to do the kinds of longer, in-depth reports we used to do has shrunk drastically. We therefore can't promise we'll be able to go into as much detail in the future as we have done in the past. It's a reality enforced by the current scheme of things more than anything else. Thanks for your comments, though! - Ed.

Sims are all crap

Dear Steve Wartofsky,

I'm tired of the industry's continuing half-hearted efforts to provide what are quite optimistically named "simulations" on the PC. As a physics research scientist I have to say, even with a P6 and 64MB of RAM and virtually endless hard disk space, the resources available on a PC to do a professional simulation are still radically limited. From my point of view, the main surprise with most simulations for the home audience is that they actually achieve as much as they do; certainly anyone involved in real-world simulation for professional purposes, though, isn't fooled by the misnomer "simulation" when they see most of what passes for same on an IBM.

On the other side of the coin, I have to wonder whether aiming for "simulations" in the home is really a worthy endeavor for software designers. The best "simulations" I've seen so far for the IBM PC have been things like **Sim Life** and **Flight Simulator**; and my impression is that neither of these have proven very entertaining to the majority of the people out there who've bought them to bring them home (**Sim Life** is a great teaching tool though, by the way!). I think at best that designers for the home PC hardware base should shoot for is a "you are there" approach to simulation (as they've already done in the most entertaining designs), and focus on providing as much as they can to make the player feel like they can

participate consistently in whatever real-world phenomenon or historical/fantasy situation is being referred to in the overall design. That way, the focus can be on providing the player continually interesting things to do and enjoy, and all the brou-ha-ha about "realism" can be uncovered for what it really is, i.e. too much barking up the wrong tree in a technological situation where what's desired can't really yet be offered.

Give the industry another 6-7 years or so and this will probably change; but for now, people working on upcoming simulations should really concentrate as much as they can on the fun factor and only do as much as is realistically possible with the limited resources of an IBM to provide enough elements of "simulation" to stay interesting — without trying to fool anybody about what's really possible.

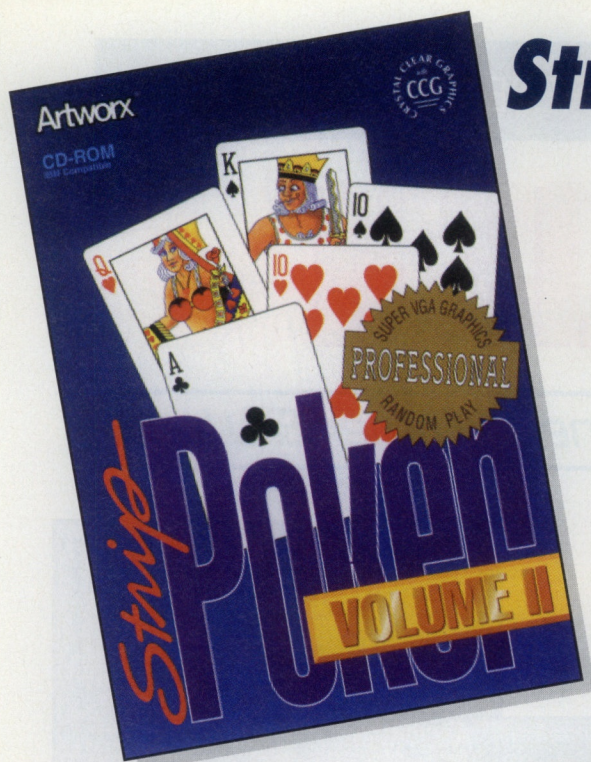
Thanks for listening,
Ellen Sharnoff
Boston, MA

Dear Ellen,

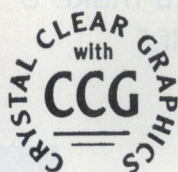
What a great letter, thanks! As someone who focuses on simulations for Strategy Plus I'd have to argue that yes, in some technical ways you might be right as to what can ultimately be done with current hardware; but that on the other hand, at a time when at least two current air combat simulations are shipping with what is essentially a fully-realized geographical mapping of real-world terrain data (no mean feat), and when at least one other flight simulation can lay claim to operating effectively and (mostly) accurately within the parameters of a real-world flight and weapons performance specifications outline, it would be valid to say that yes, realistic simulation is possible on an IBM PC, even if within certain limits. It's true that for the most part designers are providing more the illusion of realistic performance rather than a fully-fleshed out complex modeling of same (despite the frequent claims about doing the latter), but if the illusion works, why criticize it for not being completely accurate (unless of course you're trying to work with the model to provide serious, scientific and/or professional results — don't play the excellent game **Capitalism**, for instance, to make decisions about how you're going to trade on Wall Street unless you're a serious maverick, for instance)? It's like the argument about artificial intelligence modeling — do you start with a model that is intelligent or one that acts as if it were intelligent? The latter has produced more useful results of late, despite the fact that it could technically be considered "not real AI," — and if the results eventually lead to something that is AI, well then, it would've been a shame to stand too firm on the theoretical differences in the first place if it had prevented that from happening, eh? Thanks in any event for writing in. — Ed.

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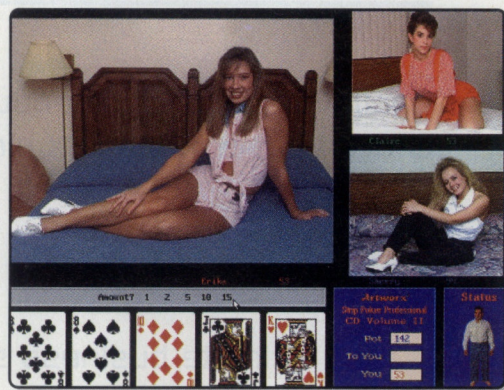
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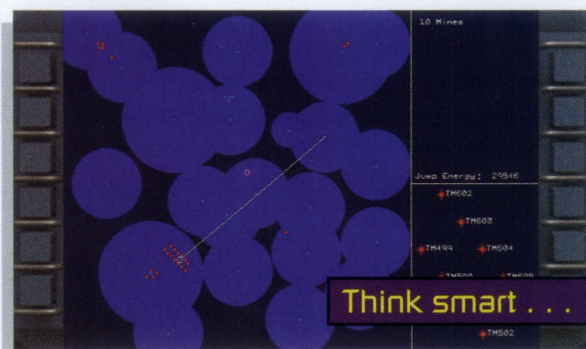
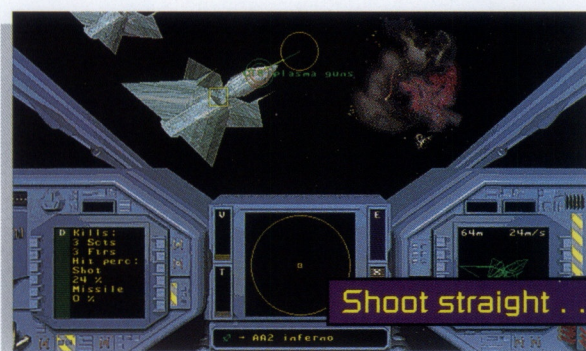
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